



**UNIVERSITY OF<sup>TM</sup>  
KWAZULU-NATAL**  

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**INYUVESI  
YAKWAZULU-NATALI**

**The Problem of the absence of a well-established  
and contextual philosophy in South African philosophy.**

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**(217031191)**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirement for the degree  
of Master of Arts in Philosophy,  
University of Kwazulu-Natal**

**Supervised by: Bernard Matolino**

**2022**

**Declaration.**

I, Njabulo Clement Dlomo, hereby declare that “*the Problem of the absence of a well-established and contextual philosophy in South African philosophy*” is my original work that has not been submitted for any form: degree/diploma or examination, at any other university. And all the citations, sources or references used in this dissertation have been duly acknowledged.

**Student Signature:** [REDACTED]

**Date:** July 2022.

I declare that this dissertation, is a record of original work carried out by Njabulo Clement Dlomo under my supervision and has been submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts in Philosophy, University of KwaZulu Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

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**Date:** .....

## **Dedication**

*In loving memory of:*

*Mafika 'Panile' Jama*

and

*To all my ancestors that have  
Protected me in all hardships of life.*

*May your souls rest in perfect peace*

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## **ABSTRACT**

In Ramose's argument, "for too long, the teaching of Western philosophy in Africa has been decontextualized precisely because both its inspiration and the questions it attempted to answer were not necessarily based upon the living experience of being-an-African in Africa". Because of this situation, many thinkers have engaged in Western philosophy more as opposed to African philosophy. Only recently some African philosophers like Kwasi Wiredu, Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, Kwame Anthony Appiah, Kwame Gyekye, etc., established and started engaging in African philosophy. The establishment of African philosophy by these philosophers was due to the need, desire and interest of a philosophy that was reflective of their continent and context. Philosophers like Kwasi Wiredu even went as far as attempting to create a system of governance (Democracy by Consensus) that was inspired by the Ghanaian philosophy of the Akan to reflect the place of philosophy. In South Africa, ubuntu was also invoked as a philosophy by various thinkers such as Mogobe Ramose as a reflection of South Africa as a place of philosophy. Ramose and Wiredu through their reflection did express clearly that Africans as a people are not monolithic. Therefore, each country needs to have a philosophy that will reflect the context and place of a thinker. In South Africa, for a long time, there has been an absence of well-established, relevant, and informative South African philosophy.

This can be traced to the practice of South African philosophy from the Apartheid era. During this period, Robert Paul Wolff once visited South Africa in 1986 with the intention of having an experience and an understanding of the academic nature of South African philosophy. His assessment of the nature of this place's philosophy was not what he expected it to be. The philosophy that was taught in South African Universities, precisely the former white universities, was just an imitation of a philosophy written and taught in American or English universities. This concern proclaimed by Wolff strongly indicates how the place-of-philosophy has been neglected in both African and South African philosophy. Two years after South Africa's first democratic election and the end of Apartheid, Mabogo P. More, a South African thinker, argued against the failure of South African philosophy to play a significant role in both setting and arguing for an agenda in a political situation that was unfolding in South Africa.

This dissertation will seek to point out the problem of the absence of the well-established and contextual philosophy in South African philosophy. The primary contribution of this dissertation

to literature is as follows. Firstly, it seeks to show the urgent need for a well-established, informative, and relevant South African philosophy. Secondly, it points out the issues that have emerged due to the absence of a well-established, informative, and relevance of this place's philosophy. Lastly it seeks to emphasizes the purpose and the relevance of South African philosophy.

Keywords: *Philosophy-in-place; 'contextual' philosophy; place of philosophy; South African philosophy; relevant philosophy*

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## INTRODUCTION

Philosophy is known as a discipline that is dominated by abstraction a discipline interested in studying various questions both general and fundamental in nature, questions about existence, reason, knowledge, and the mind, etc. Through argumentation and debates thinkers have tackled these fundamental questions from various angles or schools of thoughts (metaphysics, epistemology, or moral philosophy etc.). In this pursuit philosophy has been consistently understood, if not declared as universal in nature or always striving for universality. However, there has been a shift among various thinkers against the universalist conception of philosophy. Post-colonial thinkers such as Edward Casey, Jeff Malpas and Bruce Janz have gained enormous interest on the pursuit of a philosophy that takes seriously the place of philosophy or the geography of reason. Even the Analytical and Continental traditions have also regained interest in understanding how place, context or situated cognition, shapes the mind of a thinker, her philosophy and philosophizing. But place as a concept and as a subject matter is not new in philosophy. Previous thinkers such as Aristotle, Gadamer, Davidson and Benjamin, Arendt, and Heidegger have written intensely about the relations between place and philosophy. In *Being and Time* (1962), Heidegger offered a systematic account of an existing relationship between philosophy and place. This philosophical pursuit made Heidegger the first thinker to offer an account that was systematic on place and philosophy, making him an important figure on this subject matter. Highlighting the importance of Heidegger on philosophy and place seeks not to undermine any contribution by other thinkers, but it attempts to justify his relevance to this invoked subject matter.

Nevertheless, this project will not dwell much on Heidegger. This research seeks to investigate the problem of the absence of a well-founded South African philosophy in South African philosophy. It aims to reveal the urgent need for a well-established, informed, and pertinent philosophy in this place. It also intend to expose issues that have emerged because of the absence of this philosophy and highlight both the relevance and the purpose of South African philosophy. Chapter one will start by discussing how context or social milieu influence and shape the practice of philosophy and philosophizing (Nkrumah: 1978). It revealed a consistent historical relationship between philosophy and human life from various epochs, justifying how this relationship should not be violated or ignored (ibid.). And it will expose how different episodes of history have decontextualized philosophy from human life and society (ibid.). However, this project has



embraced or adopted the former conception that maintains a strong relationship between philosophy, human life, and society (ibid.). Secondly, it will discuss the concept of place and philosophy traced from the perspective of post-colonial thinkers such as Janz and Malpas. Predominantly from the conception of Janz: *Philosophy in an African place* (2009) and from the narration or articulation of Janz by Abraham Olivier (2016). Janz's perspective is interested in what it is to do philosophy in any human or life context. Due to its proximity to the African continent, his perspective is more significant in this project. Olivier's articulation is also significant since his work follows a phenomenological tradition of philosophy. The phenomenological tradition conceives and defines place as a milieu or context of our lived experience or our lifeworld. The implication that emanate from this conception of place is that the question or concern about place is not focused and interested on territorial space or topography, but it is focused precisely on the space where philosophy is practised. The crucial question that Janz focuses on is what it is to do philosophy in an African place? Olivier reformulates this question in a slightly different but insightful way. By asking what place does philosophy have in Africa, and what place does Africa have in philosophy? This kind of reformulation corresponds with Janz's interest in dealing with the problem of placing philosophy. But Olivier (2016) seeks to go beyond Janz's philosophy-in-place by arguing further for what he calls philosophy-through-place. Through his argument, he also seeks to address the possible implications for explicitly considering the place of philosophy in the African continent, including the possible challenges it generally presents in philosophy. But his argument or philosophy-through-place serves not as a counter-argument but as an expansion to Janz's philosophy-in-place (ibid.). However, it is worth highlighting the historical reasons why Africa finds themselves in this position.

The African in the continent has suffered a brutal, unimaginable exclusion and discrimination, the exclusion that their former conquerors have authored. There are various types of exclusions that the African have confronted; nonetheless, this chapter intends to discuss and focus on the exclusion of the African and Africa from philosophy. The establishment of African philosophy in the post-colonial era does bear the mark of African exclusion from this discipline. Chapter two seeks to expose the genesis of why the African and his place have been rejected in philosophy. Eze (1999) and Ramose (2002) trace this isolation from the modern enlightenment philosophy. In this era, thinkers like Hume, Kant, and Aristotle were interested in defining 'man' as an essential agent who is a knower and subject to be known. In their definition and classification of man, the African

was not included, which meant he was perceived as unqualified to pursue philosophy; this was the foundation of racism and philosophical exclusion of Africa and its populace. After decades of philosophical exclusion, Africans established a philosophy aiming to reflect their milieu. However, there were still some objections and misconceptions on how African philosophy should be positioned concerning analytical (universalist) philosophy that attempted to claim superiority over all philosophies, including how philosophy should be conducted. However, Matolino (2015) reveals a vital debate between Eze and Ward E. Jones on the possible connection between African and Western philosophy and how Jones misread Eze's account of this relationship, including the philosophizing. In the third section of this chapter Wiredu (1996) attempts to point out the procedure and the influence of philosophy practiced by non-professional and professional academics in the post-colonial era after the continent independence. In this period, the practice of philosophy was contrary to anyone's expectations despite some viable reasons justifying this contradiction. Theories such as African socialism (Ujamaa) that non-professional thinkers crafted significantly impacted Africans more than the ideas that professional philosophers advocated. However, what was challenging about these theories was that they were propagated through dictatorial tendencies. But the South Africa's situation was slightly different: this country was colonized quite differently than other states in the continent due to its encounter with apartheid. The way philosophy was practiced in this place during this era was not valuable for the populace. Chapter three aims to dissect, according to Wolff (1986-87), how this country's philosophy and philosophizing were caricatures of Western philosophy performed in western universities. Thinkers such as Ronal Aronson (1983) affirm this kind of imitation and Mabogo P More (1996) also echoes it.

What is more puzzling is how this practice of philosophy and theorization persisted even after the end apartheid regime? Jones (2006), Matolino (2015), Olivier (2016), and Tabensky (2017), demonstrate how the philosophy of this place fail to reflect relevant and contextual philosophy. Most of these thinkers locate this to the failure of South African philosophers to take responsibility to prioritize this place's philosophy that is sympathetic to this state. Matolino (2015) further argues that all thinkers or practitioners of philosophy stationed in this place who fail to reflect this country's characteristics cannot be legitimately called philosophers of this place. A fundamental truth justifies his claim that there is a fixed relationship between philosophy and its locality of practice; therefore, if a thinker cannot reflect a particular 'context,' she cannot be classified with

it despite being located within it (ibid.). This is a permanent nature of philosophy. However, most South African philosophers, predominantly white, have been accused of neglect and insensitivity to their place of philosophizing. And this practice has contributed to the absence of a well-established, authentic, and contextual South African philosophy that profoundly mirrors this place. For Olivier (2016) and Matolino (2020), the emergence of events like the Fees Must Fall movement, and the demand for decolonizing the university curriculum, including Rhodes must fall, and other events, have been understood as products of the failure of philosophers of this place to produce a relevant philosophy. Matolino (2020) continues to argue that the demand for the decolonization of the system of education by students caught their lectures underprepared; since both decoloniality and decolonization are concepts that demand more insights and understanding, which was lacking in their seniors. Though, the demand or project of decolonization has been invoked before, such as Negritude, African socialism (Ujamaa), etc., but it has failed to transform or produce desired outcomes for the continent (ibid.). Therefore, this leads to a final discussion by, Matolino (2019), commending that for Africa to have meaningful and productive philosophy, it should adopt Eze's conception of philosophy. According to Eze, philosophy in the continent should be divorced from other encroachments such as moral, cultural, and political to address contextual matters adequately (ibid.). He further states that this philosophy should operate through a special kind of rationality dubbed as 'ordinary reason,' and this route convinces Matolino. In chapter four, I offer two arguments in support of my conception of South African philosophy and its practitioners. The first argument intends to assert that the inability of this country's thinkers to produce a sensitive philosophy and to imitate a philosophy that is disconnected from their daily lives dehumanizes them. The second argument seeks to demonstrate and affirm, like Matolino (2019), that Eze's ordinary reason and the separation of philosophy from the moral and political is convincing to pursue. Finally, chapter five offers a brief conclusion and recommendations on other projects that need to be engaged and have the potential to advance philosophy in South Africa and the continent, such as conversationalism by Jonathan O. Chimakonam (2017).

# **CHAPTER ONE: PHILOSOPHY AND CONTEXT**

## **1. Introduction**

This chapter seeks to illustrate how and why a place, context, and experience generally carry significance in philosophy and, more precisely, in African philosophy. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section seeks to explain the meaning of context in philosophy or social milieu, a concept foundational to this chapter and the whole project. The second section is divided into three subsections. These subsections seek to discuss and explain Janz's conception of philosophy and place in the following pattern: firstly, it will clarify what is not philosophy in place, secondly, highlight what is placing philosophy and lastly it will explain philosophy-in-place. The third section intends to discuss 'philosophy-through-place,' an argument advocated by Olivier, an expansion of Janz's philosophy-in-place. Lastly, the final section aims to discuss the place of philosophy in Africa.

### **1.2 What is context in philosophy?**

According to Kwame Nkrumah (1978), the history of philosophy have revealed that philosophy could easily and simply remove itself from human life. This has been the case in some Western Universities where philosophy have been so abstract in a sense that its practitioners have been suspected of being the taxidermists of concepts (Nkrumah, 1978). However, he points out that the early history of philosophy before the foregoing one have uncovered that its living roots were inseparable with human life and the society (ibid, 1978). He asserts that philosophical origins were based on theological speculations and the earliest speculations were a combination of thoughts milling around concepts of God, Soul, Destiny, and Law (ibid, 1978). All the time these thoughts and concepts had a practical aspiration and for human existence or survival it was an era where religious life was conceived as the greatest human concern (ibid.). For Nkrumah (1978), it was an epoch where people in their day-to-day life sincerely believed that the greatest purpose of man was to worship the gods and cultivate the (crops) land. After the ancient times even recently in the Middle Ages all other concerns of human life were dictatorially subjected to the religious concerns that were administered by the clergy (ibid.). He points out that in this era the economic concerns were required by the clergy to be confined within the limits of human sustenance (ibid.). Any person who tried to supersede these limits was perceived as greedy and this was a risk of disfavour in their lives and their divine after life (ibid.). Nkrumah (1978: 29), discusses that the main concern of philosophy proceeded to be on the explanation and the clarification on the nature of God, the

human soul, human freedom, and kindred concepts. Therefore, he argued that in philosophy when the primary concerns on human life are conceived or understood differently philosophy exposes a different bias (ibid.). This means structuring or arrangement of the society takes a different shape that conform to the way philosophy is differently conceived (ibid.). He highlights that during the European renaissance, when man was a centre of the universe and human mind, and the possible ways to correct and adjust the limits of what is real became the primary concern of philosophy (ibid.). The emergence of reason became a complete stream of thought keeping reality firmly within the light of human reason (1978: 30). The limits on how much a human can understand were identified with the limits of nature (ibid.). Empiricism was another man's reflection, his own conception, and a position on the scheme of things despite being the opposite of rationalism (ibid.). This had an influence in shaping the limits about what is real in correspondence with the limits of what was understood by man (ibid: 1978). According to Nkrumah (1978), during renaissance disquisitions when man had more appreciation of his personal and individual dignity and freedom it was a response that was offered by philosophy, reflecting on the nature of natural rights and other connected thoughts. Philosophy had to conform to the era of Renaissance that had a unique conception of man as the centre of the world (ibid.). For Nkrumah (1978: 30), philosophy attempted to offer principles which were supposed to inform any relevant political theory during this period. The point that Nkrumah (1978) exposes is that from Thales to modern times philosophy has been rooted and interested in basic concerns of human life. Social milieu or context that were experienced by thinkers such as Thales encouraged and influenced him to persistently reflect and explain nature in terms of nature (ibid: 30-31). The significance of this passage by Nkrumah is to highlight how different context or social milieu have influenced and transformed philosophy and philosophizing (ibid.). The implication of this conception suggests that in each and every era or period philosophy should always take the shape of the social milieu and human concerns of that era. This project adopts this plausible understanding of context and philosophy.

### **1.3 Philosophy and Place**

On the question of philosophy Bruce Janz (2009), begins by asking where is philosophy's appropriate place? The origin of this question for Janz can be traced from Jacques Derrida. In detail this question seeks to ask, where does the question of the right to philosophy take place? (Janz, 2009: 1). For Janz there are numerous responses to this question but there is a possibility for a naive person to reply by stating that "philosophy can take place anywhere" (ibid.). He can even

emphasize that we are all philosophers in different ways and philosophy is based on abstractions and universals available wherever there is someone to think of them (Janz, 2009). On the other hand, another careless thinker can offer a different response asserting that philosophy can only take place in prescribed places, such as university departments and disciplines (Janz, 2009). However, what is crucial and noteworthy in these two possible responses for Janz (2009), is that philosophy should always emanate from a place. He is impressed by the second response, claiming that philosophy can take place anywhere (ibid.). He also clarifies that the question of “where” is not only a question that generally focuses on philosophy, but it is also a question that is directed towards African philosophy (ibid.). According to Janz the reason and the motivation of this distinct focus is due to the historical experience that has been encountered by African philosophy as he discusses that:

The history of African philosophy has been the history of the struggle to find a place, or claim a place, or to assert the entitlement to a place, in the face of those who have maintained that it has no place. It is not everywhere, nor is it in any particular, privileged place, according to those we have grown accustomed to listen to. It is nowhere. Not the nowhere of transcendence, nor the nowhere of primordiality, or memory, or promise, but rather the nowhere of oblivion, or at best derivativeness. Even the traditions of African philosophy that are most likely to simply assert their entitlement of a place and wilfully ignore the history of exclusion, must always have one eye on that which is being ignored. These traditions too come from a place, an intellectual place as well as a geographic and cultural one (Janz, 2009: 2).

The historical fact that Janz invokes, provides a revelation on how Africans as people have suffered a brutal philosophical exclusion by their former colonizers. This exclusion was based on two claims. The first assertion is that the African lack the capacity to be cognizant and reflect about themselves and their surroundings. The denying of the African the capacity to reason leads to a second claim that Africa as place is not a geography of reason or a place that can produce a philosophy. And this case Janz (2009) is confronted by these two concerning claims that the former colonizers made about the African and the establishment of African philosophy. Assertions that the African is incapable of thinking, and the place of African philosophy is “nowhere” in Africa. He also highlight that some thinkers of African philosophy have deliberately paid less attention on

the history of this philosophical exclusion. However, Janz do suggests that African philosophers should not ignore this history of exclusion it demands their consistent awareness (ibid.). The importance of this awareness is that it offers African thinkers an understanding that traditions that excluded Africans from philosophy and philosophizing also emanate from a place (ibid: 2009). A place that is intellectual, cultural, and geographical in nature (ibid.). According to Janz (2009), it is considerable to note that there an existing possibility for “where” of philosophy to be incorrectly conceived. It can be misconceived as geography of philosophy instead of philosophy of geography or other Hegelian inheritance (2009). This perception about the philosophy of geography is not what Janz (2009) seeks to advance when he argues for philosophy-in-place.

#### **1.4 What is not Philosophy-In-Place**

The perception of philosophy as the subject of inquiry of some other discipline such as the sociology of philosophy or anthropology of philosophy is old (ibid.). This perception carries a possibility to propel thinkers to engage in a discussion about the end or demise of philosophy (ibid.). This demise of philosophy can be understood as a disciplinary attempt to destroy the hegemony of philosophy and its presumption to universality (ibid.). There are various conceptions and understanding that supported this conception of philosophy and these cases logically follows like this. Firstly, there is a claim that philosophy has a consistently established dependency on the texts or literature, suggesting the limitation or reduction of philosophy to textual studies (ibid.). Secondly, there is a conception or claim that since white males of certain class or standard have been constantly pursuing philosophy, philosophy can be perceived as a product of desire or power (Janz, 2009). Therefore, in both cases the hermeneutic of suspicion destroys the false perception of philosophy in claiming to uniquely access the universal (ibid.). Further, this leads to a conclusion that the failure of philosophy to access the universal implies end of the need or the primary purpose of philosophy (Janz, 2009: 2). However, for Janz (2009), the central aim behind the imagining of a geography of philosophy or philosophy-in-place is neither the breakdown nor the dissipation of philosophy. Philosophy-in-place does not reduce philosophy to ethnophilosophy or local beliefs of a particular group of people. And it is a fallacy to claim or think that philosophy can be absorbed under other disciplinary interest (ibid.).

## **1.5 Placing Philosophy**

Janz (2009), argues that by placing philosophy in a geography, he seeks to suggest that philosophy has a contingent but not arbitrary interest, and this kind of interest responds to and shapes a particular set of conditions of reflection (Janz, 2009). This echoes his response on the identity question asking, “What is philosophy?” and he drew a map of its scope. He argues that the primary concern of thinkers in philosophy is to capture or occupy a space in the map of philosophy (ibid: 503). This means the question “What is African philosophy?” is directed or guided by the aspirations, goals, and activities conducted in Africa as a place of philosophy. It is also why African philosophy should capture a space in a philosophy map (ibid.). This conception of philosophy and its legitimacy to occupy a space in a philosophical map plays a crucial role in undermining the accusations launched by the West. Accusations or claims that Africa possesses no capacity to generate a philosophy (ibid: 503). In addition, Janz properly articulates a point emphasizing that the “spatial” mapping strategies or approaches exclude something important (ibid.). A more insightful question on place should ask “Why anyone especially the African cares about philosophy?” (Janz, 2009: 4). This question also suggests another two underlying questions which ask: what causes a person from certain cultural orientation to assume the need to utilise philosophical reason for reflection? And how does philosophical reasoning emerge? Janz (2009), contends that philosophy inevitably emanates or emerge from a place. This claim is applicable despite philosophers having an ability to ignore or failure to give attention to place in philosophy (ibid.). It seeks to suggest that place is not entirely covered by abstraction (ibid.). He emphasized that philosophy-in-place seeks to answer some serious questions. These questions are understood by Olivier (2016: 504), as interested to know: What is an existing relationship between concepts of philosophy and the place that gives them life? How could philosophy arise or emerge from particular places such as in Africa without losing its striving for universals? (Olivier, 2016: 504).

## **1.6 Philosophy-in-Place**

Janz commences by denying the existence of geographical determinism or necessary causal connection in philosophy and place (Olivier 2016). By determinism, it means there is a possibility for a philosopher to know and understand a philosophy from a specific place if a thinker can capture where that philosophy emanates from (Olivier, 2016). This would suggest that there will be no necessity to inquire about that philosophy, taking away the need to attend, reflect and commit



to it (ibid.). However, Janz reiterates that philosophy inevitably remains a reflection on its place culturally, geographically, disciplinary, and intellectually including philosophical abstraction (ibid.). Bernard Matolino emphasizes the same point on the relationship between abstraction and philosophy by stating that:

If there is any abstraction that goes on in philosophy, it is not because philosophy is in the service of that abstraction, but it is because that abstraction is in service of philosophy — and philosophy is ultimately in service of humanity. Which humanity one may ask? All humanity of course, the answer goes, but since human conditions are different, priority has to be given to this localized human, in this specific place at this specific moment. Why this is so obtains from the simple reality of the nature of philosophy. Philosophy is essentially about reflection on the human condition (Matolino, 2015: 407).

This emphasis on abstraction and philosophy also clarifies how different human conditions make it important to prioritize the context or place of philosophy. It also points out in essence what philosophy is all about which it is to reflect on the conditions of humankind, which is an intrinsic property of philosophy. Janz also argues that the place reflected by philosophy reverberates something significant about itself as place of philosophy, its possibilities and calls for self-reflection (Olivier, 2016). This means philosophy-in-place is not simply a mirror without any reflection, but a reflective abstraction from a place (ibid.). Philosophy-in-place move beyond philosophical analysis of the concept of place, it repositions the concepts of place on the practices of philosophy itself (ibid.). This emanates from an understanding that we constantly stand on shifting ground as we philosophize. As a result, we are always implicated by the concepts we employ as they never remain stable (Janz, 2009: 12). Janz put forward an emphasis that Philosophy-in-place turns philosophy to characteristics and practices, precisely reflecting on where people are, who is around them and what should be taken seriously in their world (Olivier, 2016). He asserts that in Africa the duty of philosophical self-reflection has to be specifically and inevitably be performed by African philosophy (ibid.). All philosophies are preoccupied with their “geography of reason” in the world of philosophy in general and specifically their place in relation to their cultural origins and present milieu (Olivier, 2016: 505). Philosophy is always consumed with its place in crafting or forming philosophers' identities, and this is not always expressed explicitly (ibid: 505). Janz establishes a point that the self-reflective approach for philosophy-in-

place implies that philosophy always critically enquires about its place (ibid.). He also argues that philosophy-in-place seeks not to impose any concepts on its place of practice (ibid: 2016). African philosophy is a perfect example of clarifying this claim, as it has consistently questioned and inquired about its place on the academic map of philosophy without imposing any concept of its own (ibid.). It has consistently questioned its status in its social environment and place of philosophizing that has been dominated by a status imposed by foreigners (ibid: 505). Janz emphasizes that questions such as milieu, aggregation, unity, and borders of place are some of the self-critical questions advocated by the project of philosophy-in-place in Africa (ibid.). He further contends in reference to the above questions, that there is a possibility of the emergence of novel ways of thinking and reflecting on useful concepts such as issues on tradition and reason (Olivier, 2016). The point that Janz seeks to establish about philosophy-in-place is that: in all places, whether in Africa, Europe or Asia, philosophy originates from human lived experience and there is no philosophy which is excluded from this reality (ibid.). From the origin of lived experience, philosophy is able to form abstractions and useful concepts that are artifacts of philosophy (ibid.). However, Olivier, is of a view that even though Janz have correctly posited that philosophy emanates from a place, his argument has not addressed some crucial aspects about place (ibid.). Olivier (2016), consent that philosophy-in-place by Janz do insightfully undermine or destroy the essentialism of mapping philosophy while it seeks to a claim a place in the philosophical map, especially in Africa. The concern that agitates Olivier is that philosophy-in-place lack a well-detailed account on how philosophy is grounded on human lived experience of place (ibid.). He is convinced of a need to explain the nature of the relationship between philosophy, experience, and place (Olivier, 2016). He holds that if the main focus of philosophy is only on the reflective nature between philosophy and place without the inclusion of experience it can create issues for philosophers (ibid.). Thinkers seem to possess no plausible reason why place should be more fascinating than any useful philosophical subjects that provoke philosophy to attempts self-reflection (Olivier, 2016: 506). Therefore, Olivier argues for a what he dubs as philosophy-through place a constitutive link between philosophy, experience, and place (ibid.). His argument is an expansion from Janz's philosophy-in-place, and he also seeks to answer some of the pressing questions about philosophy and place.

## 1.7 Philosophy-through-place

Abraham Olivier constructs his argument in the following steps. Firstly, he explains the relationship between experience, reason, and place. Secondly, he explains the relations between experience and place. Lastly, he connects together a link between experience, reason, philosophy, and place (2016: 506). For the construction of his argument, he employs a phenomenological approach since phenomenology is a study that focuses on the structure of experience (ibid: 506). This approach answers some important questions such as why a thinker would emphasize experience and its relations to reason, philosophy, and place (ibid.). He argues that there are more distinct, relevant, and plausible reasons which explains why experience is significant in philosophy and why this demands a phenomenological approach (ibid.). This is expressed in an argument that is divided into three steps using a phenomenological tradition (ibid.). This is also to clarify and reveal why experience has a combination of first-personal subjective consciousness and third-personally, accessible objective philosophical reasoning (ibid: 506). The point is that philosophical reasoning is a subject of experience which is first-personally owned and lives through its experience that is specifically grounded in place (ibid.). Therefore, according to Olivier it is quite convincing to use phenomenological approach on experience to argue for the connection between the first-personal situatedness of subject, its philosophical reasoning, and thus philosophy (2016: 507). Olivier (2016) seeks to investigate the meaning of experience from a phenomenological point of view, its link to reason and philosophy. He starts by pointing out that in phenomenology all crucial cognitive states of the mind that are significant for 'experience' are properly included if not articulated as he writes:

Moreover, in phenomenology, experience is characterised as first-personal consciousness, that is, owned by a subject that has or undergoes experiences. As experience is understood in terms of first-personal-consciousness, and as such includes all possible conscious states, both subconscious states (in which we are not aware of things) and rational capacities, reason is to be seen as part of, rather apart from experience (Olivier, 2016: 507).

Olivier further clarifies that phenomenology not only includes all possible cognitive states of the mind but also highlights how reason and experience connect. Therefore, phenomenology carries an advantage over other approaches such as analytical theories of mind in explaining this

connection (ibid.). Olivier draws this difference from David Chalmers<sup>1</sup> that the other theories seeks to treat experience and reason as distinct mental states (ibid). And this creates an explanatory gap between the two faculties regardless of the capacity of analytical theories mind being able to explain the mental or cognitive states of reasoning (ibid, 2016). This emphasize a point that explaining experience for these theories is a problem (ibid: 507). But in phenomenology, experience has been persistently understood to be first-personal consciousness and also understood to be accessible through the meaning of any objects it represents (ibid.). For Olivier, this clarifies that there is no explanatory gap between experience as an elusive state of phenomenological consciousness and accessible cognitive capacities. This means both are unified aspects of first-personal consciousness, accessible to third-personal observation through the meaning these objects represent (Olivier, 2016: 508). Janz, points out that the fundamental conviction of any enlightenment have unwavering faith in reason and faith in the universally triumphant power of reason (ibid.). According to Olivier this justifies a certain conception of philosophy in this day and age as to why philosophy is understood as bringing a specific enlightenment (ibid.). However, regardless of some potential or contested understanding of reason by professional philosophers, but thinkers have failed to reject that ‘reason’ is a defining feature of philosophy (ibid.). According to Janz reason has been comprehended as rationality, a term of classification and method (Olivier, 2016). This claim implies that to decide whether a belief or human practice is rational or not there is a standard procedure. Firstly, a belief or human practice is examined on how it is founded or established. Secondly, the procedure and the form of support that is used for the formation of a belief influence the outcome to judge whether the belief is rational or not (ibid: 508). This emphasis that is made by Janz is that in any case, reason is a form of ordering which includes both the order and the ordering itself (ibid.). However, Olivier argues that despite reason being a form of ordering it persistently keeps a detached epistemic relation with objects of interest. Therefore, the truth of a belief or human practice representing objects is to be defended from an objective third-personal point of view (Olivier, 2016). Since the phenomenological understanding of reason claims that ‘reason’ is a reflective activity which is not detached from but integrated with first personal experience it settles the matter. For Olivier (2016), the final piece of the puzzle, for the link between experience and reason, is to discuss how philosophy connects between the two aspects that have been discussed. Olivier (2016), draws from Heidegger’s argument he made in *Was ist*

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<sup>1</sup> Chalmers in Güzeldere (1997, 30). For additional reading of Chalmers, to have more clarity of his characterization.

*das-die philosophie?* (1956) translated as (*What is that-philosophy?*). Heidegger argues that even the famous Descartes decontextualized philosophical reflection do not cease to be committed to the meaning that objects have in the lifeworld of experience (Olivier, 2016: 509). The justification of such commitment is that philosophy is about pathos, and this means a thinker is taken in and carried away by its object of reflection (ibid.). This emphasize a point that philosophy is a live performance by a thinker (ibid.). The philosopher inevitably holds or captures a position of the first-personal and lived experience in an all-encompassing sense (ibid.). Olivier highlight that when a thinker is doing philosophy, she is pursuing the most objective conceivable third-personal perspective and simultaneously living and experiencing her engagement with the thought process within the perspectives of her own choosing (2016: 509). In conclusion Olivier claims that philosophical reasoning is grounded at the core of lived reasoning, the reasoning of a first-personally engaged philosopher that is part of their lived experience (ibid.).

The second part of the argument by Olivier seeks to draw a connection between experience and place. He begins by invoking a point that also draws on the phenomenological tradition to examine place in terms of the human lifeworld, context, or milieu of living (Olivier, 2016: 510). This is the same point that was raised by Malpas and Janz who attribute their line of reasoning on place to Heidegger in *Being and time* (ibid.). Heidegger holds that human participation in place manifests as a sense of belonging or being at home and Olivier also quotes Heidegger claiming that:

As place frames our ownmost possibilities, we identify with it, we claim ownership, we call it our place, our workroom, our abode, we reside in it as our place of belonging and dwelling (ibid: 510)

This perspective clarifies in finer detail how far place influences and relates with a person and how place can be interpreted in various ways. Another important thinker in subject of place Merleau-Ponty raised by Malpas when, he draws the significant similarities between Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty on their conception of place as field of human experience (ibid.). However, despite Malpas, Janz and Olivier, drawing their understanding of place from Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty (ibid, 2016). Olivier (2016), adopt a different line of reasoning from Malpas's in *Experience and Place* (1999). This is due to Malpas's claim that there is no importance of place to be found in human experience of place so much as in the grounding of experience in place (ibid.). However, Olivier (2016) takes a different turn as a point of departure from this argument by employing a

phenomenological perspective. He argues that experience is conceived in a particular way. Experience is understood to be a representation through impressions, beliefs, concepts, thoughts, ideas, feelings, and images etc. This constitute the meaning of an experience that is fundamentally different from things it represent (Olivier, 2016: 511). Olivier continue to reinforce that it is significant to constantly note the difference between phenomenological theories from typical theories of representation. The difference is crafted by the fact that phenomenological theories put an emphasis on the first syllable “re-presentation” (ibid.). This suggests that “to re-present objects means to make objects that appear to us to be what they mean to us with the impressions, beliefs, desires, feelings or thoughts we shall have of them” (ibid, 2016). But for typical theories of representation, it is a different case, experience is understood as an act which can either directly or indirectly represents entities as objects that are detached both within and outside the mind (2016: 511). Phenomenology claims that experience represents objects as always involved or present from within an act of engagement (ibid.). In every act of engagement objects always carry the meaning that they possess in our experience (ibid.). Olivier clarifies this point with some reference from Heidegger, stating that:

We do not represent things *qua* detached objects, to use Heidegger’s expression, “present at hand,” for them to have meaning, but, rather, we deal with things as being meaningful because they are “ready to hand” within an equipmental network of interconnected meaning (2016: 512).

This characterization suggests that the meaning of objects we possess during our engagement or encounter in a particular web of meanings constitute our experience (ibid.). Therefore, in a single process of our engagement with place, it is place that is constitutive of our experience (ibid: 2016). However, in other typical theories of representation there is an assumed explanatory gap between objects and their meaning. This means when one is having an encounter with an object there is a need to connect that object with the meaning they possess about that object (ibid.). This makes it difficult to explain the relationship between experience and place. However, the use of the term “*constitute*” by Olivier carry the same meaning as it was used by Malpas (ibid.). It means “grounding” or “founding” of experience in place (2016: 512). Malpas asserts that the “grounding” of experience also implies the establishment of experience in place that occurs in a particular condition, and this holds as long as the subject of experience and her subjectivity is physically

tangled in a place. He further highlights that human entanglement with place, should be in a sense that it allows them to appear, engage and be interconnected with things and others (ibid.). And this reflect a constitutive link between experience and place. Olivier emphasize this relationship by stating that there is an intrinsic contingent nature in the constitutive relations between experience and place (ibid.). According to Olivier (2016), the subjects are moulded by particular web of meaning in their interaction with other subjects and varying spatial locations and temporal settings cause this. Therefore, the meaning of the same objects might change from different contextual web of meanings (ibid.). It is in this contingently constitutive logic that experience is established in place in its particularity (Olivier, 2016: 512). Olivier asserts that it is crucial to formulate a distinction on how his argument departs from conventional phenomenology, even though he has employed a phenomenological approach (ibid.). He asserts that phenomenologists have generally prioritized the essential structures of the experience of all conceivable subjects in the world (ibid.). The focus has consistently been on the subject of experience in particular and its universalizable features that are classified as essential (ibid.). Phenomenologists have paid less attention and focus on the subject's particular placement in the world, regardless of what that specific place might be like (2016: 513). Therefore, particularity of place become replaced by universalistic concept of the world as the *a priori* enabling condition that structures experience (ibid, 2016). However, what Olivier (2016) is advocating for, like Janz and Malpas is a return to "context" or to a particular way placial conditions in their contingency 'constitute' experience. But it is crucial to clarify that Olivier's (2016), advocacy for contextual philosophy seeks not to undermine the phenomenological orientation toward the universality of essential structures of experience. In the following final section of the argument Olivier (2016), discusses how the return to "lifeworld" is not in conflict with phenomenology orientation.

In this section after a consistence exploration of place, its relationship with experience and reason, this finally enables Olivier to formulate the following argument: claiming that experience includes reason, and reason is the defining feature of philosophy and experience is grounded in place therefore; place must be constitutive of philosophy (2016: 513). However, for this argument to be properly comprehended, it should be of consideration that any thinker pursuing philosophy is understood to be a person with a specific first-personal background (ibid.). A background, with the philosopher's own biography, living context, training, and practice within a school of thought (ibid.). According to Olivier (2016), the following biographical question can be asked: where does

this person originate from? The significance of this question is to indicate that the pursuit of philosophy does not occur from within an impersonal view that is from nowhere (2016: 513). But philosophy is practiced by first personal subject that is influenced by the very particular place (ibid.). This influence never cemented itself with philosophy regardless of philosopher's stubborn commitment to a third-personal perspective striving for objectivity and universality (ibid.). Olivier (2016), emphasize that this has been confirmed by various divisions in philosophy, from ancient to modern times. It has implicitly revealed that philosophy is shaped and grounded from its "context" before it attempts to be universal (ibid.). He discusses that Ancient Greek philosophers had their diverse divisions like Ionians and Eleatics, with British empiricists, German idealists, and Anglo-American analytical or continental traditions (ibid.). Including African, Afro-American, Latin-American, or Chinese philosophers that were all connected and shaped by their different variations and affiliations (ibid: 513). Therefore, he holds no controversy in claiming that philosophy is practiced or pursued through place (ibid.). The viability of this argument will always hold as long as the above claim suggests that; philosophy is pursued by thinkers whose practices (methodologies, approaches, and concepts) are directed through different places as *qua* webs of meanings (ibid, 2016). This also suggests that philosophers have contingent results in philosophy due to different practices of philosophy (ibid.). Olivier clarifies this point by stating that:

If place is taken to be a contextual web of meanings, or, to put it another way, a field, then one is in fact close to what the academia, philosophy included, practiced by drawing a map of disciplines in which it divides its activities. Philosophers typically draft profiles of their very particular areas of speciality or interest or competence with reference to fields, or schools, or traditions of philosophy, each of which holds a web of connections in which concepts take their own meanings (Olivier, 2016: 514).

This seeks to elucidate a point that it does not bring any controversy to speak of a philosophy as something that is both practiced and "grounded" in its place. Even the separation of disciplines generally in academia and philosophy in particular is divided based on different performed activities emanating from different "contexts" and different practices justify the difference of those activities (ibid.). This finally guides Olivier to the same concern as Janz, on the question of the place of philosophy in Africa (ibid.).



## **1.8 The place of philosophy in Africa**

In this section Olivier (2016), seeks to address two aspects. Firstly, the possible implications for considering the place of philosophy in the continent of Africa. Secondly, he, seeks to address the challenge that is posed by the consideration of place to philosophy. He begins by agreeing with Janz's line of reasoning that a better approach to kick start philosophy in place is through questioning or questions instead of the imposition of concepts (ibid, 2016). The significance of this approach will allow philosophy to defend its territory such as attempting to find a place for Africa on the Western philosophical map (Olivier, 2016: 516). He consents with Janz on the question that is understood to be important in philosophy and place (Olivier, 2016). This question is concerned or curious about borders as it ask: why Africans as a people should care about philosophy?

However, the response that is offered by Olivier (2016), is that based on the nature of experience which exists as first-personal lived experience, part of this lived experience there is philosophical reason (ibid.). According to this reality, Olivier argues that all human beings (Africans) possess or have an encounter with first-personal conscious experience therefore it will be in their human nature to care about philosophy (ibid.). He also claims that philosophy will always have its place in Africa and everywhere in the world (ibid.). For Olivier (2016), philosophy is not restricted to academic philosophy departments but can be at home, township, train station etc. Nevertheless, it is indisputable that philosophy in academic departments will always be profound than any other place due to the level of attention offered to philosophy, but what should be understood is that philosophy is everywhere (ibid.). This means philosophical questions do not only matter to thinkers that received training in philosophy but to all people (ibid: 517). Olivier (2016) reiterates that there are philosophical questions that matter to ordinary citizens, as a result of their day-to-day life experiences and these questions should be taken seriously by thinkers within their context. Even Mogobe Ramose (2002) has also echoed the same point, in a "Futures of African philosophy" conference arguing that: Philosophers have an obligation to leave their comfort zone, in university departments to explore with experience philosophy within their place. Olivier stresses that the African continent as a place for philosophy has many places to explore philosophically, and this exploration can transform philosophy as a discipline (ibid: 517). He discusses that both African and African philosophy are terms used to classify a philosophy pursued in Africa and these 'terms

are misguided as they can only function as generic references (ibid.). He also claims that even referring to the place of philosophy in Europe, China or America is misleading in an equal proportion as in Africa. This classification fails to properly reveal and capture that philosophy and place go beyond these references (ibid.).

## **1.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has demonstrated what is “context” or milieu in philosophy, how context connects with philosophy and why this is significant in this research. It illustrated how place and philosophy is an important subject matter to philosophers in general and African thinkers in particular. This chapter also provided a distinction on what is not philosophy in place or what is not placing philosophy and it elucidated what is meant by placing philosophy on the philosophical map especially African philosophy. It explained Janz’s argument, philosophy-in-place, on how and the extension of this argument by Olivier, known as philosophy-through-place. Finally, Olivier attempted to discuss the probable consequences of considering the place of philosophy in the continent and the plausible starting point or methodology of doing philosophy in this place.

## **CHAPTER TWO: AFRICAN AND SOUTH AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY**

### **2. Introduction**

The arrangement of this chapter will be three-fold. Firstly, it will seek to focus or discuss the exclusion of Africa and Africans from philosophy and philosophizing. However, there are numerous philosophers in Africa and outside the continent who have attempted to discuss how and why Africa and Africans were secluded from pursuing philosophy, thinkers such as Emewvo Biakolo <sup>2</sup>(2002) and others. However, this chapter seeks to explain or illustrate this exclusion from Immanuel Chukwedu Eze and Mogobe Bernard Ramose. The reason of giving priority to these thinkers is motivated by how Eze and Ramose have profoundly traced the philosophical exclusion of Africans from the enlightenment and ancient Greek thinkers. Secondly this chapter will seek to discuss the relationship between universalism and African philosophy, and how significant is this relationship in philosophy. Lastly, it will seek to discuss post-colonial philosophy in Africa and the way African thinkers have handled the establishment of African philosophy since post-independence in its quest to reflect the context of this continent. It will further reveal the stumbling blocks and the limitations that some African thinkers have cautioned about in the pursuit of African philosophy. Stumbling-blocks that have attempted to destabilize the establishment of African philosophy that seeks to reflect the attributes of the continent. In conclusion it will also point out how some African thinkers have attempted to handle these factors or challenges. The post-colonial era is understood to be crucial era for both Africa as place and in African philosophy. It is an era where African as people were self-compelled to be authors of their history, culture, and experiences after the gaining of political liberation.

#### **2.1 The African exclusion from Philosophy**

Immanuel Eze correctly point out that thinkers of modern Western philosophy have consistently been interested on the problem of the nature of “man” (Eze, 1999: 49). Eze locates this problem from Descartes in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century who raised the question regarding the essence of man as the “first-principle” of philosophy (ibid: 49). The question asked by Descartes was fuelled by his eagerness to establish with certainty of reason the nature of human (ibid.). On the essence of man Descartes established a claim through his Cogito that: the essence of “man” is grounded on his

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<sup>2</sup> See the Philosophy from Africa: a text with readings 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (2002).

capacity to think (ibid). He emphatically claimed that the human ability to pursue philosophy, scientific knowledge, and work of culture, occur as result of human intrinsic capacity to think (Eze, 1999). This claim that was crafted by Descartes on the essence of man was and is still unshakable. But Descartes was not the only thinker who was interested on human essence (ibid.). Eze (1999) points out that the enlightenment thinkers such as Immanuel Kant and David Hume, were also interested in knowing this essence. Kant expressed his desire on the essence of man in an implicit manner by asking: what is man? In *Anthropology from a pragmatic point of view*, he provides a response to this question claiming that: Man is a creature that is endowed with ‘reason’ (Eze, 1999: 50). On the other hand, Hume on the *Treatise of Human nature*, crafted a so called ‘science of man’ a science that was perceived to be clear and rigorous in nature and this was also an expression of Hume’s interest in the essence of ‘man’ as a subject (ibid: 50). For Eze (1999), there are no disputes that modern philosophy thinkers have had numerous debates and disagreement on different matters. However, amongst these thinkers there are no philosophers in disagreement with the fact that man is a subject gifted with ‘reason’ and ‘understanding’ (ibid.). This agreement leads to Eze’s (1999) crucial question: why was the mission of providing a definition of ‘man’ was central to philosophy in modern era of philosophy? Firstly, the basic response to this question for Eze (1999) is from various historians of philosophy carrying a belief that the pioneer of such interest was due to Renaissance. The Renaissance which emerged as a result of various revolutions in science and culture in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century (ibid: 50). Eze further quotes Vincent Potter echoing that “this was due to cultural rebirth more traceable in Italy known as ‘renaissance’ through the rediscovery of Classical civilization (ibid: 50)”. In this rediscovery all human beings, particularly ‘man’ were given all possible attention and it is where philosophy expressed its interest in determining the nature of the human mind (ibid.). Eze highlights that the significance of this interest was for the establishment and advancement of the project of modern science (ibid.). However, he does not deny this account, but he offered a supplement an expansion on why modern philosophers had an inclination of defining human nature (ibid.). According to Eze, racial varieties drove modern philosophers to the project of understanding the nature of human as he writes:

The challenge of understanding the meaning and significance of racial varieties was a major contributing factor to the need to determine the “essential” nature of the human being – as opposed to its accidental qualities. In addition to, and along with the Renaissance discovery of the classical Greek civilization with its focus on “man and things human,”

there therefore was another kind of Renaissance discovery: the discovery of the Savage (Eze, 1999: 50).

The information exposed by this text is that racial diversity and racial difference was another factor behind the eagerness to comprehend the fundamental nature of man. Therefore, the renaissance ended up having two critical discoveries the one of savage and the age of 'reason. These are historical events that are parallel in occurrence but carry a crucial difference from "Barbarian" or "Gentile" of the Medieval times, specifically the one of "savage". In the preceding Medieval times, the latter categories had dominion (ibid.). Eze (1999) argues by stating that the author of difference on these events was based on a following specific reality. In Medieval times, there was little historical content on the varieties of human races due lack of travel around the world (ibid.). This era or period meant it was confronted by insufficiency of knowledge about the other, making it prone to assumptions and unfounded speculations (ibid.). Therefore, Eze (1999) argues that the classification of humans that were outside Latin culture as "Barbarian" or those who were not Christians as "Gentile" was based on dogma and untenable views. However, in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century the explorers had already travelled the globe to practically encounter various races or the other (ibid.). This meant more knowledge was accumulated about the world and things human in their variety of races (ibid.). The gaining of knowledge about the world destroyed the social arrangement or categorization that Latin and Christians advocated in the medieval times (1999: 52). However, new categories emerged during enlightenment because of new knowledge and diminished trust in the bible (scripture) and its prophecies (ibid: 52). According to Eze the opposition was between the "Civilized" and the "Savage", the "Historical" and the "Primitive", the "Progressive" and the "Archaic" (1999: 52). Human travel and ethnography played a significant role in the crafting of a new philosophy that was based on truth and history (ibid.). He reiterates that the so-called discovery of peoples and cultures that were fundamentally different from each other perceived as inferior raised new questions about the destiny of man (ibid: 52). He claims that the construction of various projects of modern philosophy and enlightenment, human difference or otherness was important (ibid.). These projects were interested in distinguishing the other, and "savage" became a term that was used to describe other cultures and peoples outside Europe (ibid.). This term or categorization became part and parcel of the surrounding and oppositional tradition (ibid.). For Eze (1999) "savage" was conceived as "darkness out of which the light of reason must make itself and shine." He emphasized that the term was employed as a reference to peoples and cultures who

were non-European, claiming that they reflected a lack of 'reason' (ibid). This thinking that was racist and discriminatory in nature was advocated by modern or enlightenment philosophers such as Hume, Kant, Aristotle, and Frege etc. (ibid.).

According to Eze (1999: 53), even Kwasi Wiredu did warn about these thinkers. In Wiredu's developments on ideas about relations between modern philosophy and intellectuals, he maintains that: It is impossible for African philosophers to take pride in the culture of the philosophical achievement of thinkers like Aristotle or Hume, Frege etc. (ibid: 53). However, Western philosophy students can take cultural pride in such achievement (ibid.). He also highlighted that to articulate some of these modern thinkers it is imperative for an African to be calm and sensible (ibid.). Wiredu emphasized that thinkers Like Hume, including Marx expressed zero respect for a black person both as a human and a thinker (ibid.). Therefore, the only preference that African thinkers can have for these intellectuals must revolve mostly on the considerations of truth value (1999: 53). Mogobe Ramose (2002), is another thinker who provides characterization of modern philosophers of the enlightenment. He specifically offers another insightful characterization of African philosophy and modern thinkers, precisely on how philosophy has been practiced in the African continent.

Ramose (2002), begins by revealing a historical fact that for a very long-time non-African thinkers have been at the forefront dominating discourses on Africa. Even though there are numerous reasons authoring this state of affairs, but the unjustified and untenable violence of colonialism should be highlighted (2002: 1). Ramose (2002), argues that colonialism has made the African continent to have a great number of unappointed illegitimate spokespersons. These self-appointed illegitimate mouthpieces single-headedly claimed to possess a right to speak on behalf of all Africans as a people (ibid.). He discusses that this included providing the definition of what it means to have an African experience and what is truth for Africans (ibid.). Therefore, this meant Africans as a people were left disempowered and voiceless about themselves (ibid: 1). Ramose (2002), points out that decolonization or African political independence from the colonial regimes was perceived as an end of African disempowerment and voicelessness. However, in deep scrutiny and analysis, decolonization did not end the situation, but it revealed itself as a significant catalyst in destroying the voicelessness or silence of Africans (ibid.). Ramose (2002) is of the view that it is still a necessity for Africans as a people to assert and uphold their legitimate right to be authors

of their meaning of experience and truth. But in order for such project to be a success it is incumbent upon Africans to take the initiative to represent themselves through speaking for and about themselves (ibid.). He contends that this will permit the construction of an authentic and genuine African discourse about the African continent. Eze in consonance with Ramose is interested in revealing the root cause of African turmoil that disempowered and rendered Africans voiceless about themselves (ibid: 1). However, for Ramose (2002), the main reason for relegating Africans to silence as a people is traced to Aristotle's definition of 'Man'. For Aristotle 'Man is a rational animal', and this characterization became a foundation of colonization (ibid.). This definition by Aristotle did not include all members of the human race as it excluded Africans, Amerindians, and Australasians (ibid.). For Ramose (2002), this definition also excluded women, claiming that they were beings who possessed a mind that was without or incapacitated to 'reason.'

This definition and interest in 'man' became a foundation and the pillar of what Ramose dub as "the struggle of reason" (2002: 2). Further, the struggle for reason was not only narrowly focused on man and women but also between colonialists, Africans, Amerindians, and Australasians (ibid.). In communities and societies of man that overtook voyages of discovery, a historical encounter that transformed knowledge and worldview were governed by specific social ethos (ibid.). He claims that the deep-rooted social ethos in these societies was based on Aristotle's definition of 'Man.' But, it is indisputable that, man that undertook the 'voyage of discovery' were driven by blameless curiosity (ibid.). However, he admits that, is a historical reality that the 'voyage of discovery' did not end well, as they turned into unjustifiable, untenable, and violent colonial incursions. The harsh reality about these events is that their outcomes and consequences are still felt by Africans in the here and now (ibid.). In the current era, there is still a perception suggesting that the entire process of decolonization has consistently kept a racist belief that 'Man is a rational animal' (ibid: 2). This belief is still exclusive in nature, specifically to Africans, Amerindians and Australasians classifying them as animals incapable of 'reason' (ibid.). He contends that in the current era, the struggle for reason has re-merged in the whole world predominantly in the West due to their resilient racism (ibid.). This racism is advocated or invoked by the condescend the future generation of the former colonizers who have adopted the same attitude as their forefathers (ibid.). This condescend have consistently rejected both the probability and possibility of African philosophy due to their desire to constantly dominate Africans (ibid: 2). Ramose (2002) argues that the only time the condescend takes African

philosophy seriously is based on the condescendor's approval of it as a serious philosophy (ibid). He stresses that "the condescendor is frequently ready to consider the probability of African philosophy in as much as the judgment pertaining to the experience, knowledge, and the truth about African philosophy is recognized as the sole and exclusive right of the condescendor" (2002: 2). And this condescendor have employed his material power to justify the unfounded fictional right to maintain and defend an implausible claim that Africans are incapable of producing knowledge and truth (ibid). According to Ramose:

The self-appointed heirs to the right to reason have thus established themselves as the producers of all knowledge and the holders of truth. In these circumstances, the right to knowledge in relation to the African is measured and determined by passive as well as uncritical assimilation, coupled with faithful implementation of knowledge defined and produced from outside Africa (Ramose, 2002: 2).

This exposed perception seeks to clarify a point that the condescendor does not see herself as equivalent to an African he elevates himself as an author and the finisher in knowledge production. The African is solely perceived as the consumers of knowledge controlled and produced by the condescendor. The African is only expected to utilize, apply, and respect knowledge that is produced outside her context. The kind of knowledge constantly seeks to paint the African context is not worthy of serious consideration. The primary reason for such encounter is based on the condescendor's claim that an African is incapable of reason and no intellectual value can emerge out of this continent (ibid.). In Ramose's (2002) view, the condescendor still has some intentions to dominate other members of the human race. These desires are expressed through the imposition of democracy, globalisation, and human rights. However, Ramose (2002) is preoccupied with a question: why and how do Africans find themselves in such misery? His response points straight to unjustifiable wars of colonization as accountable and proven historically to be the cause of African misery (ibid.). The legitimate owners of land in the continent were forcefully removed from their land through brutal wars of colonization (ibid.). The loss of land to the conquer was followed by the loss of sovereignty and dignity for Africans (ibid.). Ramose (2002) submits that land and life have a fundamental close relation. This means the African dispossession of land to the conqueror was the greatest life-threatening exercise since land is a vital resource to human life (ibid:2). This life threatening exercise was made possible through the 'right of conquest,' a claim



that since Africans were classified as a race that had absence of reason, it was a duty of their colonizers to conquer them and uplift them to a better status (ibid.). It was this colonial principle that coerced the African into a money economy (2002: 2). The life of an African was turned from a peaceful, stable, and manageable existence into poverty in a short period (ibid.). In an economy where money is the only crucial resource for survival, the African had no other option but to work for money to satisfy her basic necessities and pay tax for owning a home on her own land (ibid.). However, this violated the African's right to life, the inalienable right to subsistence.

Ramose (2002), make an emphasis that all existing human rights are centred around the recognition, protection, and respect of the right to life. Therefore, to discuss human rights on the basis of consistent violation of the right to human life is meaningless to the African (2002: 2). The discussion on human rights would only be meaningful, when there is a restoration of material and practical recognition, protection, and respect for the African's inalienable right to subsistence (ibid). The African has made some plausible attempts to restore this inalienable right through their demand of reparations (2002: 3). This attempt was appropriate on moral and legal grounds, and it was founded on a claim that there is an undisputable historical and conceptual connection between colonization, racism, and slavery (ibid.). However, in United Nations conference on 'racism' held in South Africa in 2001 the African demand for the inclusion of 'reparations' on the agenda did not receive any welcoming gesture (ibid). Countries such as United States and Israel retaliated this proposition by threatening to boycott the event, if the 'reparations' agenda become included. In the same conference there was another position in favour of United States, the condemnation against anyone who attempts to repeat any barbarities and cruelty of Hitler's Holocaust (ibid.). Ramose (2002), does not dispute the position advocated by the United States, however, this position is undermined by their failure to support the inclusion of 'reparations' in the UN agenda. The response that was shown by the United States including the majority of Western countries through their silence about the matter of 'reparations' reveal a notorious character of these countries (ibid.). These countries failed to take responsibility of accepting their guilt and wrongness about slavery and colonization (ibid: 3). He further argues that the silence of Western countries at the conference was an insistence that it is acceptable for inhumanity of the global structural violence and poverty to be maintained (ibid.). This was done at the expense of an African who was treated as less human that do not deserve to have a decent life like the majority of Western

countries including Israel (ibid.). According to Ramose (2002), despite the response that was offered by Western countries pertaining restitution the African is also to be blamed stating:

That African relented in the name of compromise clearly underlines the urgent need for authentic African philosophy aimed towards the liberation of Africa. Thus, the struggle for reason is not only from outside but also from within Africa (ibid: 3).

This emphasis seeks to advise that the African failure to have an authentic African philosophy should not only be attributed to the West. But it should also be traced from the African failure to stand firm without compromise about themselves in crucial matters including ‘reparations’ in the conference. This failure contributed negatively on the African liberation and the struggle for reason. Ramose (2002), also asserts emphasizing that ‘All men are rational animals’ is the primary cause of the struggle of reason. He highlights that this is the foundation of racism and a pioneer of the struggle of reason in African philosophy and this claim seeks to classify “man” in two categories (ibid.). It suggests there is a man who is possession of reason and the other who is without reason (ibid: 3). However, this foundation of racism has remained strong and unshaken in the here and now despite the common adoption of democracy and the culture of human rights (ibid.). He points out that Man were discriminated and classified into various races through their accidental biological features such as blue eyes, skin colour, short hair, or an oval cranium (ibid.). He points that these traits were used as a justification for dividing man and to decide their status of reason (ibid.). However, this implausible and insufficient evidence had no rational ground to craft this division of man (ibid: 3). Even the African colonization and Christianization were premised and justified on this conventionally valid but less scientific or indefensible proof (ibid.). A justification that logically suggested that since the African was classified as a being that is without ‘reason,’ it became admissible for the oppressor to enslave him, as they claimed that:

But they must be seen as slaves of a particular kind, namely sub-human beings who, because of lack of reason, can have no will of their own and therefore no freedom either. To teach them anything that human beings can understand and do by virtue of their rationality would be a contradiction in terms. It would be tantamount to redeeming them from the status of sub-human beings and to elevate them to parity with human beings (ibid, 2002: 3).

However, the Papal bull's declaration, *Sublimis Deus* classifying all man as rational animals, significantly destroyed scientific racism by science itself (ibid.). But this declaration was insufficient to completely destroy and eradicate racism from the social consciousness of the descendant generation of the former colonizers in the metropole and the host countries (Ramose, 2002: 4). Ramose (2002) argues that the only desire for this descendant generation towards the victory over scientific racism and the Papal bull's declaration was to eradicate the two completely. This would help them sustain the myth that only a specific portion of humanity possess a prior, exclusive, and superior right to reason (ibid, 2002). Ramose (2002) is troubled by a question that seeks to understand: Why did the teaching of Western philosophy in African universities have failed to address the substantial experience of racism in the continent in light of philosophical racism? In his response he contends that the teaching of Western philosophy for a long time has not been based on an African context (ibid, 2002). This is because philosophy has not focused on the practical living experience of being an African in Africa (Ramose, 2002). The teaching of Western philosophy in Africa has been about the mimicry of a Western lived experience (ibid.). He stresses that the questions that were asked reflected a place or the context of Western philosophy, even though these questions were asked by philosophers who were within an African place (ibid, 1998). However, he propose that:

The mimetic and the decontextualized character of the teaching of Western philosophy in Africa calls for a radical overhaul of the whole epistemological paradigm underlying the current educational system. To evade this duty is to condone racism-which is a form of injustice. The injustice is apparent in the recognition that there is neither a moral basis nor pedagogical justification for the Western epistemological paradigm to retail primacy and dominance in decolonized Africa. The independent review and construction of knowledge in the light of the unfolding African experience is not only a vital goal—it is also an act of liberation. (Ramose, 1998: 4).

This perception assures that establishing African philosophy that reflects the context and experience of Africa as a place of philosophy is inevitable. On the other hand, Ramose (2002) highlights that the question which has been of interest to non-Africans is about the existence of African philosophy. This question has been asked despite African philosophy's existence in the

continent (ibid.). Philosophers in the continent and outside have made strong arguments on the existence of African philosophy, but this question have not ceased to exist (Ramose, 2002:5). According to Ramose (2002), the profound meaning of this question on the existence of African philosophy is not empirical since there are numerous African philosophers within continent. He emphasizes that there are African philosophers who have received training in philosophy, therefore, if the question of the existence of African philosophy was based on a practical aspect, it would have ceased to exist (ibid.). This condescending question is based on the ontological nature of an African's intellectual capacity to philosophize (ibid.). Non-Africans believed that if Africans were exposed to philosophy, it would be impossible for them to cope with its requirements since they are “rationally” unfit for philosophy (Ramose, 2002). In a brief sense, the question on the existence of African philosophy meant that non-Africans perceived the African as sub-humans who are not fully developed, and not expected to carry all the duties that fully developed human beings could take, philosophy included (Ramose, 2002). Matolino also invokes this point:

Actually, the matter is put far strongly by the likes of Hume, Kant, Hegel, and Marx who believe that African people are naturally not endowed to be philosophical. Philosophy is not for them; they lack a mental capacity to do what philosophers in the West do when they philosophize (Matolino, 2015: 401).

Furthermore, Ramose discusses that the repercussions of these condescending acts by non-Africans have contributed massively to the struggle of context in African philosophy (Ramose, 1998). Instead of some African philosophers directly focusing on developing African philosophy, which reflects Africa as a place of philosophy, they have spent time justifying its existence (ibid.). And for Eze, even the already established African philosophy should have a strict relationship with other philosophies, especially those that seek to reflect the Western context. The following section aims to discuss this relationship.

## **2.2 Universalism and establishment of African philosophy**

Matolino invokes a crucial debate between two thinkers: Immanuel Eze and Ward Jones, on the relationship between African philosophy and analytical philosophy in his paper: Universalism and African philosophy (Matolino, 2015). This section will not discuss Jones's response to Eze and his

universalism. But it will only highlight some elements of his argument, and the purpose of not fully including Jones's response and ideas is because of how he has restructured his thought and philosophy over the years. His paper titled: 'Philosophers, Their Context, And Responsibilities (2006)' reflects a different thinker that has distanced himself from his old thought, including his debates against Eze. A thinker who has considered his misperception of philosophy and adopted some of Eze's approaches to philosophy. However, the following chapter will employ some of Jones's work which will be extracted from the cited paper.

In this debate, Eze claims that various thinkers within analytical philosophy exist. He typifies these thinkers as the 'ultra-faithful' as these thinkers are doubtful about the existence of African philosophy (Matolino, 2015). This doubt is due to the defense that the 'ultra-faithful' put forward, defending their view that philosophy is universal (ibid.). They believe it is impossible to narrow philosophy to identifiers such as African, German, India, etc., even though they do not deny the ability of philosophy to emerge from these conditions (Matolino, 2015). Moreover, for Eze these philosophers think of philosophy as simply capable of analyzing things, but it cannot do so at the same level as those things analyzed (ibid.). Eze's argument against this position is what he calls a 'historical approach'. This approach stresses the context or place from which philosophy emerges (2015). However, Eze's 'historical approach' is refuted by Jones, who is in support of the 'ultra-faithful' position. Jones doubts that African philosophy in status has developed to the same level in relation to what he calls established philosophical traditions (ibid.). Further, he also doubts that African philosophy exists, expressed through a proposed revision of Eze's initial approaches of philosophizing or doing philosophy (Matolino, 2015). He seeks to provide a defense of the 'ultra-faithful' and 'anti-imports' positions of philosophy. These are one of the positions or approaches of philosophizing proposed by Eze (ibid.).

Jones recommends that analytical philosophy will gain from what he calls a mature African philosophy (ibid.). However, what Matolino (2015) attempts to point out is that the defence offered by Jones, on the 'ultra-faithful' and 'anti-import' positions does not work. This is because it is built on an outstandingly bad misreading of Eze's purpose in stating his four approaches to philosophy. What is vital for Matolino (2015) is to reveal the uncharitable interpretation of Jones's African philosophy project. Precisely the claim the claim made by Jones that analytical philosophy will stand to gain from a mature African philosophy (ibid, 2015). But for Matolino (2015), the

problem with this claim is based on undermining African philosophy, treating it as a mere ‘thought’ that is still going to develop, and reach a stage of maturity, then qualify as a philosophy, like other established philosophical traditions. The following critique by Matolino is to seriously reject Jones's condescending thinking that analytical philosophy possesses a status that is superior to African philosophy (ibid.).

Firstly, Matolino begins by explaining Eze’s view on the relationship between analytical and African philosophy. He does this by reiterating that the nature of the relationship between the two philosophies is tense, and co-existence cannot be reconciled (Matolino, 2015: 434). Eze suggests that if one had to take a closer look at the concerns and concepts of the analytical philosophy, few questions would emerge. The possible questions that can arise are as follows; in what way does African philosophy fit into these categories, and what are the reasons that might cause a thinker to speak about African philosophy and analytical tradition? He continues by arguing that the majority of analytical philosophers cannot talk about African philosophy, the only thing these thinkers of the analytic tradition can do, is to refer to African philosophy as philosophies of Africa<sup>3</sup>, philosophy for Africans, philosophy in Africa, or philosophy and the study of Africa (ibid: 434). For Eze, the reluctance to speak about African philosophy is based on their belief that philosophy is universal, it cannot be reduced or contextualized by modifiers such as African, German, Indian, etc. also, ethnic, and cultural limitations cannot reduce philosophy (ibid.). However, philosophy surpasses divides of culture, nation, or country for these thinkers, regardless of whether philosophy can emerge from these specificities (ibid.). The second argument by thinkers of the analytic tradition is that philosophy can analyze things but cannot claim the same ontological status as the things analyzed. And what is open to be examined by philosophy is culture, ethnicity, and race without being changed by these subjects of analysis during the process (ibid, 2015). Correspondingly, when philosophy takes an interest in its analysis, the self-analysis must be characterized not according to national, ethnic, or cultural prefixes or qualifiers but as the even more philosophically rarefied notion of meta-philosophy (ibid.). Eze brands this type of thinkers of the analytic tradition the ‘ultra-faithful’. These thinkers are dominated by a belief that philosophy's history is synonymous with analytical philosophy (Matolino, 2015). Interestingly for Eze, this belief is untrue, and the correct perception is that there is an indisputable convergence

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<sup>3</sup> See M.E.S Van den Berg (2003: 280), on the misleading nature of this characterization.

between the history of philosophy and African philosophy. And the very existence of African philosophy, is like a voice that is counterhegemonic specifically to histories of modern philosophy (Matolino, 2015). This voice exists to demonstrate that the development and history of philosophy should not be perceived and understood in a narrative of analytic philosophy together with its history (Ibid.). There are various other groups that share the same reluctance to speak of African philosophy like the ‘ultra-faithful,’ and Eze identifies the groups:

These groups are comprised as follows: 1. The cautious namer: they hold that we must not define the field too narrowly as doing so will discourage its emergence. They hold that the field is still emerging; hence it must be allowed to do so without strictures of narrow definitions ` (ibid.: p.208). 2. The fearful. They hold that we cannot speak of African philosophy while we are working on it (either we curse it, or gods will punish us). Or even worse, we may become complacent falling into an assumption that the thing already exists (ibid.: p.207). 3. True universalists: these hold that culture and theory mutually influence each other. Hence it should not be the case that exporting the analytic tradition to African represents cross-culturality and interdisciplinarity (Ibid.: pp. 208-209). Then finally there is Eze’s preferred way: 4. Historical approach: which would hold that philosophy as we know it today emerged from specific contexts e.g., the enlightenment (Matolino, 2015: 434).

Furthermore, what can be noted is that various disagreements outlined by Eze are, mere family disagreements. Most importantly a legitimate and indisputable point driven by dominant factors in that context or place of philosophy provides the trajectory that should be followed by a philosophy that originates from that place (ibid.). Eze, makes a citation of an Italian enlightenment thinker Giambattista Vico precisely on his achievement. Vico went back to study his native Italy, where he studied his culture and tradition. This exercise by Vico gave rise to theories that had implications beyond his own country. And Eze’s intention of citing Vico is to point out the significance of someone’s culture and the influence it may have (ibid, 2015: 435). The belief that Eze holds is that philosophical studies of our cultures and traditions of the African continent as well as with race, gender and class can give rise to a beneficial purpose and profound impact on our consciousness as a people, including our disciplines in a similar way as Vico (ibid: 435). The reality that confronts African philosophy, as noted by Eze, is its preoccupation with political concerns such as poverty

and race. However, it is up to analytical philosophy to choose whether it takes a stance of making itself relevant to these practical concerns or it continues with the ahistorical and apolitical positions (ibid.). Regardless of any position pursued by analytic philosophy, Eze points out that; in principle, there will be neither lessening in academic rigour or intellectual seriousness of philosophy due to its relationship to the historical and political; nor would be diminish in philosophy's claim to universality, if philosophy chooses this relationship, specifically the histories of neglected or politically abused people of Africa (Ibid: 435). Further, what should not be forgotten is that issues of African people are both particular and universal. Its particular issues because its African issues and universal because its human issues (ibid.). To avoid any possible confusion and mischaracterization of Eze's position or claim, Matolino offers more finer details as he clarifies that:

On the face of it, it may appear as if he is suggesting that such a universalist philosophy. It may appear as if he is suggesting that such a philosophy must simply find an interest or fit in African affairs, which are human affairs anyway. But things are not as simple as the initial appearance may lead some to think. Eze's suggestion is more profound than merely finding and interests. What Eze is pointing out is the importance of the effects of the history of subjugation suffered by African people. What universalism philosophy has to do in not merely to find an interest in issues about that subjugation but to associate itself with the interests of the subjugated people. To put it bluntly the real question is what can universal philosophy say on behalf of these and in direct condemnation of the perpetrators of their oppression and exclusion? While it is good for universal philosophy to speak in universal categories that can be applicable to all, the challenge here is specifically to speak of this condition that has been imposed on one people by another (ibid: 435).

What is solidified by Matolino, above all, is a specific point that Eze drives. That free association with the people who experienced subjugation and speaking of their situation or condition will neither diminish nor undermine philosophy of its higher status (ibid.). With this claim, Eze, is precisely dealing with the fear or worry that engulf the 'ultra-faithful'. Emanating from their belief that if they decide to speak of specific condition in philosophy, analytical philosophy, and philosophy in general will lose the most important reason or purpose for its existence (ibid.). This fear of the 'ultra-faithful' causes them to choose to speak of general categories, simultaneously



believing that; the general categories capture and apply to all while putting no emphasis on great injustices suffered by specific people (ibid.). Moreover, Matolino (2015) suggests that; there are woeful results from the 'ultra-faithful' due to their inability to speak to specific people such as to this or that man, women or child, their persistence is speaking about universals, something imprecise, that apply to no-ones specific conditions and in this case, including the African condition or place. A question might arise, responding on the foregoing; asking about the nature of the association, and the question could be; is this association metaphysical? Or it can be rephrased differently, asking; whether several facts of the matter are constituted if not determined by this association (Matolino, 2015). There are two considerations brought forward by Matolino (2015) tackling the question above justifying that both forms of association that are questioned do hold. The first one is that if the association between analytical philosophy and African philosophy is genuine, then there is a possibility for both traditions to gain knowledge about certain truths about each other, together with people they claim to stand for (ibid.). Secondly, the metaphysical, while it would be of naivety to perceive that this association will inevitably constitute new facets of any matter, but the truth is a rewarding different and new insight of reality in both traditions can emerge, as long as this is based on mutual respect (ibid.). In addition, it is also conceivable that if these traditions begin to have an open conversation with each other, that is based on mutual respect there is a possibility to reach new and improved metaphysical schemes (Matolino, 2015). The key and the most crucial association will be a political one and the reason for this is clear and straightforward for Matolino (2015). It is due to some of the well-known or serious thinkers such as Kant, Hume etc. in Western philosophy that have made a significant number of uncharitable and condescending remarks specifically on black people, including their proclamation that Africans are incapable of philosophizing. The worst part rests on the fact that, in the historical archives, the West has brutally oppressed Africans as a people. Also, there is no universal acceptance of the incoherence of racism emanating from the analytic tradition. And if analytical philosophy were to align with African philosophy's political aspirations, it would take long to move towards philosophical equality (ibid.). But the least that can be done for the movement toward philosophical equality is that there should be a consistent, equal treatment of the history and method of philosophizing between these two philosophical traditions (ibid.). The demand for this equality is not complex since both traditions derive their sense of equality on a fundamental principle of philosophy of reflecting on the nature of the human race and its surroundings (ibid.).

## 2.3 Post-Colonial African Philosophy

The post-colonial period in African philosophy is a period of professionalism this means philosophy it is an era where philosophizing began to be practiced by professional philosophers (Wiredu, 1996). However, Wiredu (1996) argues that a paradox took place in the early state of this period. It is because it was simultaneously a period where non-professional philosophers propounded more philosophical doctrines than professional philosophers (ibid.). The significance of this for Wiredu (1996), is that the philosophies that non-professional philosophers pursued shaped and influenced the destinies of the multitudes of the African population. On the other hand, the philosophies that was expected from professional philosophers did not have a significant influence and expected impact according to the majority of people (ibid.). What justifies this encounter is that the first wave of African rulers successfully led the anti-colonial struggle (Wiredu, 1996). These non-professional philosophers, also known as philosophers-Kings, won the struggle that was both cultural and political in nature (ibid.). In post-independence non-professional philosophers were confronted by different challenges emanating from an urgent need for political and cultural reconstruction (Wiredu, 1996). Some pertinent questions that confronted non-professional philosophers were: What form of government or social organization is suitable to the social and economic development requirements? How to restore the cultural identity that was destroyed by colonialism? These questions inevitably led these thinkers to reflect on the first principle of philosophy (ibid.). Leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah, Leonard (Sedar) Senghor, Sekou Toure, Julius Nyerere, and Kenneth Kaunda decided to put forward a political and developmental blueprint that was based on general conceptions of community, polity, and the general good (Wiredu, 1996). According to Wiredu:

Not all of these men were philosophers by original bent. Some, indeed, like Nkrumah and Senghor has technical training in philosophy. But others, such as Kaunda, had only their own enlightened institutions to rely on; necessity, to be sure, was the mother of their philosophical inventions. Nevertheless, in every case it was historical circumstances that made them philosopher-Kings (Wiredu, 1996: 145).

This view is self-explanatory it seek to suggest that some of the philosopher-kings of the post-colonial era who attempted to address philosophical matters within the continent barely had a training in philosophy. However, their historical success as leaders who defeated the colonial

struggle gave them legitimacy to be accepted as prominent philosophers. Their theories such as African socialism known as Ujamaa by Nyerere, is one of the philosophies that are a product of the philosophers-kings (ibid.). However, Wiredu (1996) did affirm that theories like Ujamaa were intellectually refreshing. This is because African socialism like Ujamaa have a special relevance to African traditional societies in contrast to the thinly Africanized varieties of Marxist socialism that Nkrumah and Seko Toure or Negritude pursued by Senghor (ibid.). Wiredu (1996), emphasized his point that the philosophies or theories by non-professional thinkers were genuine with the most time-honoured of motivations regardless of the mixture of thought about the content of these theories. He quoted Tsenay Serequeberhan, a thinker who shared the same sentiments claiming that the works by philosopher-Kings was critical and explorative engagements of one's own cultural and historical specificity (Wiredu, 1996: 146). However, what carries a negative connotation about these theories is that they predominantly took the form of sloganized dissemination by their party machine, in an environment that did not allow any opposition against these theories (ibid, 1996). This authoritarian dissemination of philosophies had influenced the African life (ibid.). Unfortunately, this influence was not synonymous with widespread acceptance and comprehension of these philosophies, except the Eastern part of the continent, where Swahili was instrumental in providing the possibility of understanding to the masses (Wiredu, 1996). Wiredu argues that the issue of language was also at play as the philosophies in French or English were very hard to understand for the African majority regardless of how well tuned, they were in their native languages. Wiredu (1996), is of the perspective that it would be plausible for professional African philosophers to be pardoned if they contemplate with ambivalence on the aspect of the philosophical activities of the statesman philosophers (ibid.). The philosophers that were perceived as spiritual uncles of the continent possessing some cultural pertinence (ibid.). Wiredu (1996) ask a pertinent question on how professional African philosophy looks in comparison to the philosophy of the philosopher-kings? This question is interested in the genesis, content, and mode of dissemination despite the genesis being obvious (ibid.). Wiredu (1996), discusses that statesman thinkers in the genesis of the post-colonial era were under the pressure of historical leadership. The leadership was expected to provide a viable theoretical and normative underpinning for their programs of national reconstruction that were more pressing and urgent. But for professional African philosophers the situation was slightly different (ibid.). Wiredu clarifies that:

The imperatives of doctrinal productivity were not and still are not as peremptory for the professionals, though no less historical. At one level they, or more frankly, we face the same enigmas about God, mind, destiny, meaning, morality, freedom, justice etc. that tease the philosophical consciousness everywhere. It is probably through the tantalizing inquiries arising from these intellectual problems that many of us were drawn into the discipline in the first place (ibid: 146-147).

The difference that Wiredu captures seeks to point out that the amount of pressure and the demands that confronted professional philosophers were less intense or commanding. This difference is worth noting even though their work had the same historical significance as statesman. Both of these camps once confronted similar or the same philosophical matters that challenged philosophical awareness everywhere. He holds that there is a probability that the challenging nature of philosophy in the post-colonial period might have inspired many thinkers including him to be drawn into philosophy. Some of the problems that confronted professional philosophers had their origin from the colonial past (ibid.). But some issues were contemporary they emerged as a result of the distraction caused by the plight of indigenous misgovernment of the philosopher-kings (Wiredu, 1996). Wiredu (1996) affirmed that another crucial distinction between professional philosophers and statesman lie on the philosophical training. Professional philosophers received their education from foreign institutions despite the reality that some were located within the continent (ibid.). For Wiredu this meant that the only significant connection of indigenous heritage that professionals had was through their informal upbringing (ibid.). Their literary work was predominantly embedded in foreign languages that they were trained in (ibid: 147). This experience inspired Wiredu to pose a question that sought to enquire about the identity of the professionals asking: Who and what, then, are we? Wiredu holds that:

It is this problem of self-definition that lies behind the intense debate among African professional philosophers on the question of just what African philosophy is, a debate that once seemed to eclipse the will to tackle substantive philosophical issues. The question, to adapt Kwame Appiah's phrase, is indeed a necessary question. It is not one that is likely to be disposed of shortly, and so it is important that, amid this legitimate methodological soul-searching, we devote some attention to some of the other necessary questions of our discipline (Wiredu, 1996: 147).

The point is that self-definition is a problem which was fundamental on the debate that sought to answer What African philosophy is. However, at some point these debates were understood as a destruction from attending other pertinent and serious philosophical issues. African professional philosophers saw it necessary to employ a broader approach by attending to other pressing matters in African philosophy. Interestingly for Wiredu (1996), thinkers such as Kwame Gyekye, on the *Essay on African philosophical thought: The Akan Conceptual scheme*, Segun Gbadegesin in his *African philosophy traditional Yoruba philosophy and Contemporary African Realities*, and Serequeberhan on, *The Hermeneutics of African philosophy*, offered different publications. These thinkers took the initiative of writing a variety of concepts from the nature of God in and human personality to issues of fate and freedom, interrogating the place of individuality within the quest for social good (ibid: 147). This initiative was also an investment for the upcoming modern African philosophy students (ibid.). To offer them an overwhelming, easily accessible literature on method and substance from professional sources (Wiredu, 1996).

On the content of philosophy, the work of the philosopher-kings was less meta-philosophical in relation to the one produced by African professional philosophers (ibid.). However, Wiredu (1996) argues that this difference was not automatically justified by the lack of academic training on some philosopher-kings. But this was due to their direct commitment to politics and their time-consuming curiosity of trying to understand what African philosophy was (Wiredu, 1996). According to Wiredu (1996), non-professional philosophers are well-known for producing a variety of ‘socialist philosophies and ideologies that seeks to reflect their aspirations and indigenous orientations (ibid.). Wiredu quotes Serequerberhan when he refers to contemporary African philosophy as; “not the theoretical urgent demands of modern science that bring forth the concerns, but it is political-existential calamity interior to post-colonial era within the African continent which brings forth the concerns and creates the theoretical space for the discourse of African philosophy” (Wiredu, 1996: 148). Wiredu approve this characterization which is applicable to both philosophers-kings and the professionals (ibid.). However, he claims that there is a need to distinguish between narrow and broad political concerns (ibid.). He insists that philosophy is political in a broad sense, due to the understanding of reality that humans seek for the development of human existence (ibid: 149). Wiredu (1996), asserts that within the variety or range of contemporary concerns in African philosophy there is a possibility to accommodate other aspects and concerns. The pursuit was propelled by advancements in logic, mathematics, and

sciences but was not supposed to be conceived as a departure from the intelligible motivations in African philosophy (ibid.). According to Wiredu (1996), numerous African philosophers have written on philosophical matters that holds no connection with colonial and 1post-colonial traditional African thought and experience. Their work such as articles on Descartes' *cogito*, Greek science and religion etc. was an addition to already existing African-orientated contemporary concerns (ibid.).

Wiredu (1996), argues that by contrast, the controversy on how African philosophy should be practiced which sometimes was misunderstood as being focused on a troubled or disorderly question asking about the existence of African philosophy. He holds that "there has seemed, at least in one layer of discussion, to be a polarization of opinion between who see African philosophy as coterminous with philosophical investigations having a special relevance to Africa and those of a 'universalist' outlook (ibid: 149). However, the 'universalist' outlook did not significantly contribute to asserting the significance of studying African culture and its philosophical heritage. They only insisted is that the study of African culture and its philosophical heritage had to be critical and reconstructive (ibid.). They also hold another view that African philosophy as a class was supposed to be a program of domesticating any modern philosophical resources that African culture has not tackled (ibid.). However, this 'universalist' insistence have caused them to be accused of complicity in logical positivist thinking (ibid: 1996). Wiredu (1996) rebukes African contemporary philosophers who expressed disapproval at the preference of the 'universalist' claiming that their work has no special link or connection with Africa. He asserts that these African philosophers fail to recall that because of history, the 'universalist' philosophical work can belong to two traditions at once. Therefore, it is incorrect for these thinkers to deny the relevance of certain a discovery because it does not emerge from their culture the relevance of the discovery can be traced to it in terms of truth or its practical consequences (ibid.). For Wiredu (1996), discoveries such as penicillin emanating from western culture are a useful example. He clarifies that his conception had no intention of denying the existence of conceptual barriers to intercultural communication, more precisely in abstract issues (ibid.). Wiredu (1996), return to philosopher-kings by pointing out that these thinkers did not partake on the debate on the question of African philosophy. This is despite their thinking being dominated by the same motivations of self-definition a foundation on the debate of African philosophy (Wiredu, 1996). This revelation was traced in the extent to which all philosopher-kings made claims about the links between their

philosophies and traditional African thought (ibid.). Wiredu (1996: 151), emphasize that there is a need to reject the fallacious claim that if a philosophy has no links with African traditional thought, philosophy has no place or use in contemporary African philosophy. Despite Wiredu's rejection this line of thinking this kind of thinking is still shared by a bunch of professional philosophy of the current era (ibid.). According to Wiredu (1996), quoting Serequeberhan who exposed Wamba-Di-Wanda's incoherent case of being irritated by African thinkers who perceived some truth in Western thought while expressing interest in specific version of Marxist- Leninism. However, Wiredu do point out that in some cases Western thought dominate African philosophers (ibid.). He clarifies that some African thinkers accept Western thought without a proper reflection on this thought. A proper reflection for Wiredu allows thinker to discovery whether there is no African thought which is better or equivalent to the Western thought (Wiredu, 1996: 151). Lastly, on the mode of dissemination of philosophy between professional and non-professional philosophers the difference is quite clear. Wiredu discusses that due to colonial history both philosophers have expressed their philosophical reflection through foreign languages and bear some sobering consequences (ibid.). However, the stateman philosophers disseminated their thoughts through their party machine but African academic philosophers had will and power to force widespread dissemination of their philosophy (ibid, 1996).

## **2.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has fulfilled its promise, by first discussing how the African and the continent as a place of philosophy has been excluded in pursuing philosophy, it has further elucidated why this exclusion took place tracing this from the period of enlightenment. Secondly, it has illustrated the prevailing or possible relations between universalism and African philosophy, revealing the importance of this relationship in the pursuit of philosophy. It has also addressed certain misconception about the understanding of African philosophy by various universalist thinkers. Finally, the chapter have briefly explained the practice of philosophy in the continent in post-colonial era immediate after-gaining independence, how philosopher-kings and professional philosophers have attempted to pursue a relevant contextual philosophy. It has evaluated and exposed the various issues that has African thinkers pointed as a caution for the success and failure of pursuing an appropriate philosophy.

## **CHAPTER THREE: ISSUES DUE TO UNESTABLISHED PHILOSOPHY**

### **3. Introduction**

South African philosophy have not offered something significant for the ordinary South African, no relevant philosophical reflection of the country's contexts has emerged. In the Apartheid era White South African philosophers were actively caught up in Western philosophy that always seeks to reflect Western context. After the demise of apartheid there has been no significant changes in the nature and the content of this country's philosophy. Philosophers like Robert Paul Wolff (1986-87), Mogobe P. More (1996) and Ronal Aronson (1983) launched accusations and criticism against this status quo in South African philosophy. These accusations were launched on later stage of the Apartheid and after the fall of the of apartheid government. However, more than 25 years after the termination of Apartheid South Africa is still confronted by a philosophy that fail to reflect the characteristics of this place or context. In the contemporary period thinkers like Matolino (2015), Abraham Olivier (2016) and Petro Tabensky (2017), etc. have seriously condemned and demonstrated how South African philosophy continue to fail in reflecting its context. The chapter seeks to discuss how and why philosophy in South Africa from Apartheid era until now have not reflected the context of this country. The entire chapter will be in fourfold in the first section it will seek to discuss the nature and the practice of South Africa philosophy in an apartheid South Africa as characterised by Robert Paul Wolff. The following section seeks to discuss the nature, the content, and the practice of South African philosophy in the current era of democracy. The third section will seek to discuss issues that have emerged due to the nature and the practice of South African philosophy. The final section seeks to present Eze's argument on why and how philosophy in this continent (including south Africa) should be separated from politics and morality to be able to reflect on philosophical matter in a more productive manner.

### **3.1 APARTHEID AND SOUTH AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY**

In May 1986, a dean and chairman of the philosophy department of Witwatersrand University invited an American thinker Robert Paul Wolff to visit South Africa for a month (Wolff, 1986-87). In this visit, Wolff (1986-87), was expected to conduct lecturers in both political sciences and philosophy third-year students lecturing on the philosophy of Karl Marx. He did his lectures in universities such as Natal/Durban dominated by whites, Durban/Westville dominated by Indians, University of Pretoria, and University of South Africa (ibid, 1986-87). In each university Wolff



collected the syllabi, the reading lists samples, and publications as well as other philosophical instruction and activities that were prioritised by these South African universities (Wolff, 1986-87). The aim of his collection was to construct or form a well-founded and complete understanding of the nature and the practice of South African philosophy (ibid.). He claims that his primary observation was that South African universities were divided according to various racial categories (ibid.). The structuring of universities on racial basis did reflect a South Africa that was governed by an apartheid regime (ibid.). Universities were arranged in the following order firstly, there were autonomous, white-dominated universities such as the University of Witwatersrand, Potchefstroom, Rand Afrikaans University, the University of Natal in Durban, University of Cape Town, University of Pretoria, Port Elizabeth University, Rhodes, Stellenbosch, and University of Free State (ibid: 1986-87). The second group consisted of the 'state' universities that was specifically created to educate Indians and Coloureds, universities such as the Indian-dominated Durban/Westville, and the predominantly Coloured University of Western Cape (Ibid.). The third group was black universities created to provide education to South African students in institutions like Transkei, Venda, University of Fort Hare, Zululand, University of the North, and the University of Bophuthatsanas (ibid.). Outside the three categories of universities there was UNISA the only university that included all races reflecting demographics of this country (ibid.). However, the official languages that was used in all these universities did not reflect the South African demographics (ibid, 1986-87). Afrikaans and English reflected the divide of South African philosophy (ibid.). What is more puzzling for Wolff (1986-87), is that White and Afrikaner professors and staff were dominating all (including black) universities. The South African English language universities was simply an imitation of the English provincial model of philosophy <sup>4</sup>(ibid.). Both the written and taught philosophy content in these universities could not be distinguished from the one that practiced in American or English universities, it purely reflected the American Analytical philosophy departments (ibid.). What this meant is that there was an absence of a philosophy in South African that sought to reflect the South African context during apartheid (ibid, 1986-87). Wolff (1986-87) argues that if South African philosophy reflected its place it was supposed to express and demonstrate that it was practiced in a society that was fascist, racist, and extremely balkanized by conflicts. The conflicts that were between the oppressive apartheid regimes and nation-wide liberation movement (Wolff, 1986-87). On the Afrikaner

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<sup>4</sup> Also see (Van den Berg: 280).

branch of white philosophy, the things were different, the role of philosophy was different compared to the English white university as it had more political significance (ibid.). The Afrikaner branch of philosophy reflected and defended the life lived and desired by an Afrikaner, it sought to justify why apartheid should be accepted as a system of government (ibid.). This is witnessed in the official state philosophy of education of the apartheid regime the Fundamental Pedagogics and its practical application, Christian National Education (Wolff, 1986-87: 99). According to Wolff “the small majority of South African philosophers identified themselves as ‘Calvinists’ in orientation” (ibid, 1986-87). Majority of Afrikaners were communicants of various Dutch reformed Calvinist churches, and their philosophical identification was connected to their spiritual background (ibid.). However, Wolff claims that their ‘Calvinist’ identification was not synonymous with European Calvinism, due to the fact that the European Calvinism does not have any extensive philosophical foundation that was exhibited by Afrikaners (ibid.). For Wolff (1986-87), the Afrikaner clumsily attempted to summarize the basic principles of the ‘Calvinist’ philosophical position. Their intention was to point out how the ‘Calvinists’ principles were generally connected and involved in the official state policy of apartheid and the state education policies in particular (ibid.). Some Afrikaners that were ‘Calvinists’ theologians invoked the European phenomenology (ibid.). These theologians were claiming to possess an ability to discern, through the process of phenomenological analysis, a series of discrete spheres of human experience in each of which certain abstract essences define the fundamental principles that govern that sphere (Wolff, 1986-87). The significance of these claims is that:

This objective philosophical apprehension is combined with received truths of religion, as they are understood by Calvinists of the Dutch Reformed Churches, to yield a number of quite concrete conclusions concerning the relationships among the several racial and cultural groupings in South Africa. These conclusions, in turn, form the basis for the philosophy of education known as Fundamental Pedogogics, which in turn yields, upon concrete applications to the South African situation, the distinctive *apartheid* educational policies known throughout South Africa as Christian National Education (Wolff, 1986-87: 99).

Wolff seeks to point out that the unfounded principles of apartheid were both philosophically and theologically inspired on how to enforce and justify apartness in South Africa. The picture that is

painted by Wolff (1986-87), reveal that the nature of philosophy in South Africa during apartheid failed to reflect the South African context. In the apartheid era Ronald Aronson (1983), another American thinker discussed about the duty and responsibility of South African philosophers in his paper: 'What should philosophers do today?' Seven years later, he published a book titled "*Stay out of Politics*": A philosopher views South Africa (Aronson, 1990). Mogobe P. More wrote a book review about "*Stay out of Politics*": A philosopher views South Africa. According to Mogobe P. More:

As the title and subtitle suggest, Aronson's book is not only a critique of the apartheid system but also an indictment on all South Africans, especially philosophers, and simultaneously a tribute to one of the very few professional philosophers who could not and did not '*stay out of politics*' – Richard Turner. Inspired by the strong conviction that 'philosophy not only "has a role to play" but that it can, and must, involve itself in the vital social and political issues of our times' (p.ix), informed by Platonic rationalism, Marcusean neo-Marxist Sartrean existentialism and the philosophy of the Holocaust, Aronson's approach – following in the spirit of the late Richard Turner – is a reflection on and a 'practising' of philosophy in Apartheid South Africa (More, 1996).

More seeks to point out the critique and the rebuke launched by Aronson to South Africans in general and philosophers in particular who failed to fulfil their philosophical duty of engaging with politics and reflect South African context during apartheid. He also made an acknowledgement of thinkers such as Richard Turner who risked their lives by confronting political and social matters. Turner and other thinkers of the same nature demonstrated with boldness how South African philosophy was supposed to be handed by thinkers in an apartheid. However, this section will not invoke Aronson in more detail, as Wolff has offered a similar illustration on South African philosophy's nature during apartheid.

### **3.2 PHILOSOPHY AFTER THE FALL OF APARTHEID**

After the passing of the apartheid regime South Africa decided to adopt and embrace democracy as a system of governance. South African leaders had a desire to govern a country that was not divided on racial lines where all cultures and races were treated with dignity in social, political, and economic affairs. However, in more than two decades in a post-apartheid era this desire has failed to materialise. Almost in all universities the practice and the content of South African

philosophy has been highly condemned by various thinkers such as W.E Jones (2006), Bernard Matolino (2015), Pedro Tabensky (2017) etc. Regardless of racial diversity and representation in university departments and student intake. These thinkers have shared a similar concern about the failure of South African philosophy to reflect its context or place of practice. This section seeks to discuss and evaluate the nature, the content, and the practice of South African philosophy in the current era of democracy. The title of an article written by Jones (2006): *Philosophers, Their Context, Their Responsibilities*, declares that it is not an anathema or counter-intuitive for one to examine the relationship between the responsibility of philosophers in a given context. In this paper Jones (2006), seeks to defend a general claim that philosophers do have a responsibility to their context. However, he has no intent to accuse any philosophers in general or South African philosophers of their failure to fulfil their responsibility to their context (ibid, 2006). On the other hand, Matolino (2015) posits an argument that the practice of South African philosophy fails to adequately reflect the characteristics of this country as a place of philosophy. Contrary to Jones's latter position he accuses South African philosophers of neglect (ibid.). The same accusation against South African philosophers is launched by Tabensky (2017). He emphasizes that in the current South African context the practice of philosophy is blind to the political situation of this country it talks to students and academics who are not at the receiving or losing end of economic injustice (ibid: 76-80).

This section will prioritise Matolino's line of thinking because of his specific interest in South African philosophy and his relevance to what this section seeks to fulfil. Matolino claims that South African philosophy is decontextualized from its place of practice (2015: 399). Despite the historical reasons that justify such a situation he points that the future of South African philosophy can only be guaranteed by a constant rejection of this status quo (ibid.). He argues that there is a necessity for a deliberate responsiveness to the philosophical needs of this place and should be pursued by well-established thinkers in the discipline of philosophy (ibid.). Matolino (2015) uses Professor Plymouth as an example to clarify what makes a thinker that is practising philosophy in South African to qualify to be called a South African philosopher. Firstly, he establishes a point that there are South African thinkers who are employed in various philosophy departments in this country, and they call themselves South African philosophers (Matolino, 2015: 408). By labelling themselves as South African philosophers in a broader sense carries a certain meaning and some expectations (ibid: 408). This classification carries more than one meaning, firstly, it can suggest

that these philosophers work in various South African universities, but they are not South African citizens. Secondly, it can also suggest that these thinkers are citizens of this place as they work in universities of this place (ibid.).

However, for Matolino (2015), Professor Plymouth as an example for his argument belongs to a latter category and this Professor carries a certain identity. As a thinker she has attained her professorship in the late '80s from the university, where she is currently employed (ibid.). Because of her hard work she has published 100 articles and three books under her name (ibid.). In sports, she is an intense follower of Springbok a reflection of her love for the national rugby team, and she frequently express her sense of pride when the South African National Soccer Team wins something (Matolino, 2015). In philosophy she specializes in the philosophy of Language and determinism, consistently writing and presenting on thinkers like Frege, Wittgenstein, Russell, Alston, and Strawson (ibid.). Plymouth has adequately dealt with the core issues that arise from the work of these thinkers. Her response to their work has been taken seriously by other thinkers that are also specializing in her area of interest (ibid: 408). She has no hesitation calling herself a South African and South African philosopher (ibid.). However, despite the undeniable fact that she is a South African the question that is asked by Matolino (2015) seeks to know whether does this Professor qualifies to call herself a South African philosopher? According to Matolino (2015), Plymouth can be called a South African philosopher in reference to her as a South African-born thinker who works in one of the South Africa universities. This identification can be used when she finds herself in the gathering with other thinkers who are from outside this country (ibid: 408). But outside the geographic identification illustrated above, Matolino (2015) argues that Professor Plymouth is not a South African philosopher (ibid.). The primary reason for denying Professor Plymouth the status of being a South African philosopher is due to her failure to satisfy the basic obligations that is expected from her on this place (Matolino, 2015). Plymouth fail to reflect on questions that are pertinently affecting this place (ibid.). Matolino (2015), argues that her philosophical activity reflects on questions that are outside South Africa, in spite of her being stationed within this country. He emphasizes that the situation of Professor Plymouth is not only tied to her as a thinker in South Africa there is a majority of thinkers that fit into her category as he points out that:

Having been trained in a set of circumstances that looks to Western philosophy as an exclusive place for philosophizing, they are either ignorant of local philosophy, or do not see local conditions as in need of philosophical interrogation, intervention, or analysis. Or worse they do not believe that there is any philosophy in this place that is in the southernmost tip of Africa. Or more realistically they are simply unable to connect with the philosophy of this place since they have never been equipped to think of this place as capable of producing a distinct philosophy. The case of Professor Plymouth is what characterises most of our universities. Former white universities are dominated by white academics whose philosophical interests lie in far-off lands, theories, and long-dead thinkers. The PSSA, our local body of philosophers, at its annual conference is a beautiful collection of philosophers mainly from this country addressing all sorts of philosophical issues that absolutely have nothing to do with this place (ibid, 2015: 409).

Matolino seeks to clarify that most thinkers in South African universities including Professor Plymouth have constantly prioritized Western philosophy over South African philosophy. There are various reasons which can justify this act, but almost all of these reasons can be tied to the history of the African exclusion from philosophy and philosophizing. He also points out that even entities for South African philosophers like Philosophical Society of South Africa (PSSA), that appeared to be advocating for philosophy of this place have been accused of failing to address matters of importance and relevance to this place. However, for Matolino (2015), an objection can be launched against this kind of thinking an expectation that a philosopher should always reflect the geography of reason in their philosophy. The objection can claim that no philosopher should be obliged to pursue a path of academic inquiry that reflects their contexts (Matolino, 2015). Asserting that thinkers in their academic space specifically philosophers should forge a pathway limitlessly wherever fancy leads them (ibid.). This is a crucial requirement of academic freedom for thinkers in all academic disciplines especially in philosophy (ibid.). Therefore, to claim that philosophers have a moral obligation to reflect the context of philosophy is perceived as an enemy of academic freedom (ibid.). In response to this objection Matolino (2015), argues that despite some merits in this objection his thesis does not advocate for philosophers to be solely cognisant about what happens in South Africa. But he holds that for philosophers of this country it is inescapable for them to philosophize in ways that completely ignores their place of philosophy or in ways that appears not to take seriously the philosophical needs of this place (ibid: 2015). He

attempts to show that as a philosopher stationed within the South African borders this carry certain implications that automatically suggest that he is affected by things that are particular to this place (ibid.). He continues by asserting that this demands him as a thinker to consistently evaluate and align himself to South African realities (ibid.). Therefore, this makes it impossible for him to escape these realities and the presence of this place which he is simultaneously part of it (ibid., 409). According to Matolino (2015), as a person who operate in this country, he enjoys the pleasures this place offers to him and suffers the depravities at the same time. Therefore, this kind of experience forms and influence his perception of certain things and how he interprets the world around him and other existing parts of the world (ibid.). He further argues that as a philosopher there is something that oblige him to relate to this South African place without violating his work of being a philosopher. However, he rejects a view suggesting that philosophizing should be universal, or a claim that philosophy should be encouraged to be universalistic in outlook (2015: 409). This rejection is justified by the fact that to philosophize is to reflect on human affairs of a specific man, woman, and or children of a particular place or context (ibid.). This is always the case despite of the reality that some affairs can be universalizable (ibid.). He emphasizes that the role of a philosopher is to fundamentally engage these human affairs through philosophical reflection (ibid: 2015). A philosopher should ask direct questions that have a bearing on what are the humans experience of this country, how these experiences is perceived to be and what humans of this this place desire their experiences to be (2015: 410). Matolino argues that it is possible for a thinker like him to remove himself from his place of philosophy and begin to think about matters that sustain no connection with his current surroundings, but this can only be qualified as deceitful or wishful thinking (ibid: 410). This is because after completing this decontextualized reflection he returns to reckon with his close surroundings that still demand his attention as a thinker (Matolino, 2015). However, according to Matolino, it is possible for one to think that the role of philosophers he advocates fail to take wondering seriously a principle that allows the genesis of philosophy (ibid.). But this is not the case for Matolino (2015), he is not departing from a basis that in wondering is the genesis of all philosophy he is advocating for a kind of wondering that well directed and responsible. He clarifies this point by stating that:

If I wonder about the nature of the universe, humanity, political structures, gods and other affairs that are both philosophical and relevant to this man, woman and child, I can only do so with the purpose of eventually being able to speak to this man, woman and child. If I

wonder about these human affairs, but fail to speak to these contextualised humans, then my wonder would have been in vain. Wonder in philosophy does not refer about unicorns or golden mountains; it means to wonder about affairs that speak to human exercise in as much a significant way as possible (ibid, 2015: 410).

An emphasis here is that wondering should produce content that is in line with the context that has invoked and inspired that wondering. Since the purpose of philosophy is to reflect its contexts, practitioners, and consumers. Matolino also clarifies that, his argument is not focusing on the style of doing philosophy, but it is concerned with the use of philosophy (ibid.). Thinkers like Professor Plymouth may be interested in pursuing certain notions in philosophy such as proper names, meaning, sense and reference. However, by this very act she has abdicated her duty to reflect philosophy of this place (Matolino, 2015). According to Matolino this accusation stands in spite of the significant influence of her work outside South Africa context (ibid.). This influence can satisfy her intellectual curiosity as a thinker, but intellectual curiosity is not supreme purpose of philosophy, despite being an essential feature (ibid.). He, emphasize that the ultimate goal of philosophy is to reflect on human affairs with an intention to improving these affairs and finding appropriate methods to enhance them (ibid.). However, he clarifies that it will be incorrect for his argument to be understood as claiming that the central questions in philosophy are questions which are only interested on how the application of philosophy can improve human affairs (ibid, 2015). He argues that it is possible for a well-developed philosophy with an intention to enhance people but the people it seeks to develop remain impoverished and not responsive to that philosophy (ibid.). The reason for this outcome can emerge because the philosophy that seeks to improve people and their conditions is not the best philosophy for enhancing their conditions (2015: 410). The main argument for Matolino (2015), claims that philosophy can focus in any area of interest, but it should not be insensitive or detached from South Africa it should ask pertinent questions about it place (ibid.).

Matolino (2015), has some reservations about South African dominant professional academic philosophy. He claims that in its intent, scope, and application, South African academic philosophy has largely remained and continues to be in the shape of Professor Plymouth's work (ibid, 2015). It is decontextualized and removed from it place of philosophy where philosophizing takes place (ibid.). In some cases, this philosophy feels limited and hindered by the South African environment



as its claims that this place fails to live up to the philosophical rigour then decide to locate itself in other contexts or places (2015: 411). However, he rejects this line of thinking by asserting that Professor Plymouth is a victim of her philosophical training despite her being an important thinker in her field and department. Therefore, with her influence and significance on her scholarly work she begins to victimise her environment by refusing to adjust to it (ibid: 411). Matolino emphasize that despite Plymouth being partially a victim to her philosophical practise she is constantly causing harm on her project of philosophy because of its lack of relevance to her place of operation (ibid.). Professor Plymouth identifies herself as an African in general and a South African in particular, but she does not believe that there is a possibility to speak of an African or South African philosophy (ibid.). Her perception about African or South African philosophy is due to the fact that she does not classify or qualify these philosophies as doing the same reflection that she is used to and trained in (ibid.). Because of her condescending perception she believes that for South African philosophy to become a proper philosophy that she can take seriously it needs the aid from real (Western) philosophy to qualify to be a philosophy (ibid.). The reason for this condescending attitude by Plymouth lies on her unfounded perception that there is only one cannon of philosophy that exist, and this cannon is connected and consistent with the Western world view and scholarship (ibid, 2015). According to Matolino (2015), this perception of philosophy is both personal and institutional the undermining of the importance of South African philosophy is visible, there is no room for philosophy of this place (ibid: 411).

Matolino (2015), broadens his argument with an illustration on how the struggle of philosophy in a democratic South Africa has been going (ibid.). For a while, the struggle for freedom (independence) and equality has been achieved and this victory has opened up avenues to tackle other pertinent struggles (ibid.). In various struggles that have emerged the struggle that has an opportunity of gaining victory is the one for an authentic philosophy (ibid.). A struggle to affirm that thoughts and experiences of Africans and South Africans as a people matter in an equal proportion as other human beings (Matolino, 2015). He asserts that due to colonialism and apartheid philosophy has been a handmaid of exclusion, and this type of exclusion has persistently been understated (ibid.). By bolstering the culture of the white minority and as a representative of the achievements of the minority of white, black people have been effectively excluded from being involved in both the philosophical project and the structure that maintains the philosophical practice (2015: 411-412). As a result, Western epistemologies assumed dominance over local

epistemologies based on a claim that local epistemologies have no history in the academe. He, highlight this point claiming that:

For this reason, the notion of struggle becomes very pertinent because the philosophical struggle of this place is a continuation of the political struggle that brought freedom to the people(s) of this place. Yet at another level the philosophical struggle of this place is a struggle between an epistemology of dominance or an epistemology that seeks to dominate all other epistemologies by appealing to its imagined universalist nature and character and insisting that all epistemologies must live up to its character (ibid, 2015: 412).

The point that is put forward is to clarify how the philosophical struggle is connected to an ongoing political struggle that has achieved freedom for the subordinated people of this place. The philosophical struggle that also exists in this place is the one that seeks to counter the epistemological dominance advocated by the universalist with the intention of sustaining superiority over all other existing epistemologies. The proclamation is that for any other epistemology to be taken seriously it is an imperative for those epistemologies to match the universalist standard (ibid.). However, Matolino (2015), contends that South African philosophy has to struggle to reflect its context to overthrow this universalist perception of philosophy. He stresses that this struggle should emerge from a realization or an understanding that is based not only on a contestation between epistemologies but also on the severe possibility of failing to find a place in its own place (Matolino, 2015). Since the history of conquest and subjugation has produced consequences that are still felt and experienced even in the current era (ibid.). Therefore, a South African philosophy that reflects this context cannot be born out of leisurely musings (ibid, 2015: 410). He insists that philosophy of this place can only emerge out of a struggle to occupy its rightful place in its own home (ibid.). Even though there has been attempts previously through ubuntu to address some human affairs, experiences, and philosophical reflection in this place, but more should be done to place of philosophy (ibid.). Lastly, the point that Matolino (2015) seeks to put into perspective is that while there is a meaning of being stationed in this South African place. There is a more substantial meaning to be either black or white, poor, or rich, male, or female, etc., of which these are also identifiers that South African philosophers carry (ibid, 2015). Each and every philosopher of this place who carry these identifiers are cognizant of the implications and the meaning connected to these identifiers (ibid.). A white male professional philosopher

understands the advantage he carries as a thinker in relation to his fellow black female philosopher (ibid.).

The argument that is offered by Matolino in this section had no intention to personally undermine and attack white philosophers like Professor Plymouth and their universities (ibid.). But the purpose of his argument was to expose an existing attitude that is inspired by white philosophy that fails to allow the growth of other philosophies (ibid.). Part of this attitude has even forced the majority of South African students to confront issues that are caused by the failure of South African thinkers to produce education that reflect their context (ibid.). Students took the matter with their own hands through fees must fall movement and the call for the decolonization of the curriculum (Matolino, 2015).

### **3.3 FEES MUST FALL, AND SOUTH AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY**

The fees must fall movement and calls for the decolonization of the curriculum in South Africa have a significant connection with the failure of South African philosophy professors to produce a philosophy that seeks to transform South African students (Matolino, 2020: 1). He argues that the problem may be located in their failure to uphold their role as practitioners in a field that demands them to be wise (ibid.). The same sentiments are shared by Olivier (2016), claiming that the students protests on the issue of fees and the need of academic curriculum transformation including philosophy aroused a rhetorical question. This question asked why people in this place should be concerned about what is offered in philosophy (Olivier, 2016). His emphasis is that South African thinkers need to pay attention and listen to what people from all corners of the society, the streets, and townships etc. where majority of their students originate from to be able to reflect a philosophy that resonate with them (ibid: 2016). But according to Matolino (2020), the prioritization of technical aspect of philosophy that reflect a decontextualized Western philosophy such as validity, brain in a vat and justifications, etc. by thinkers of this place has created an intellectual vacuum in South African philosophy. This vacuum have contributed to the calls to decolonize the university curriculum (ibid: 1). However, the demands for decolonial education was led by eager students who were neither professional nor knowledgeable and sophisticated philosophers (Matolino, 2020). Their eagerness was an expression of impatience, anger, and frustration because of being materially and academically excluded in a country of their own (ibid.). For Matolino (2020), the students felt academically excluded by their institutions of higher

learning through their failure to transform their curriculum and materially excluded through persisting poverty that has engulfed this country. He also highlights that this exclusion is structured to make the acquisition of knowledge to suite a particular section of the society against other sections (ibid.). The challenge is that during their protests students confronted practitioners who were professional and educated teachers who perceived themselves as intellectually superior with real interest to defend (ibid.). These professionals responded by ridiculing the real interest of the students disqualifying and classifying their argument as something misguided, immature, and ambitious (2020: 1). Despite students being ridiculed by professionals they were also let down by the act of violence that emerged from their protests (ibid, 2015). For Matolino this ended up supporting the ridicule of the professionals as if their undermining of student's interest were correct (ibid.). However, Matolino (2020) holds that the student's call for decolonized education is right and legitimate. He argues that students encountered two problems during their confrontation (ibid.). Firstly, they lacked a coherent theoretical outline of what the program of a decolonized system would involve, an issue even their learned professors were not properly knowledgeable about (ibid: 1). This was a trap for students since decoloniality itself is an academic subject that had to be understood by their lecturers before entertaining the student demands (ibid.). Matolino also points out that for a long time in Africa the concept and practice of decoloniality has been raging since independence with various approaches interpreting and understanding its most important tasks (ibid.). He reiterates that the decolonial movements have been part of the continent before quoting Ndlovu-Gatsheni's claim that:

Decolonial movements assumed various forms and terms such as Ethiopianism, Garveyism, Negritude, Pan-Africanism, African socialism, African Humanism, Black Consciousness Movement, and African Renaissance. Thus, unlike simple anti-colonialism, decoloniality was and is aimed at setting afoot a new humanity free from racial hierchization and asymmetrical power relations in place since conquest (Matolino, 2020: 5).

Furthermore, Ndlovu-Gatsheni pointing that:

Decoloniality names a cocktail of insurrectionist-liberatory projects and critical thoughts emerging from the ex-colonized epistemic sites like Latin America, Caribbean, Asia, Middle east, and Africa; it seeks to make sense of the position of ex-colonized peoples

within the Euro-America-centric, Christian-centric, patriarchal, capitalist, hetero-normative, racially hierarchized, and modern world system that came into being in the 15th century (ibid, 2020: 5).

What is reflected by the text is that the project of decolonization and decoloniality in Africa has a broader reference and connection with other continents that have suffered similar oppression with the continent of Africa. There are two issues Matolino (2020) seeks to establish, and the first one is that; some decolonial movements in the African continent have been criticized for their simplicity or failure to advance the cause of the people of Africa. Decolonial movements such as the Negritude and African socialism have been suspected of this failure and faced criticism (ibid.). Negritude by Senghor is a theory that was dismissed because it was an epistemological framework that caricatured Africans as people that were naive and unresponsive to reason (ibid: 5). This is due to Senghor's insistence on emotions as a mode of knowing. This theory erupted a debate questioning whether Negritude was fulfilling the purpose it created to counter white supremacy or was no longer relevant (ibid.). On the other hand, African socialism as a political theory was rejected because it has led people of the continent to material impoverishment while simultaneously contributing to the oppression of individual rights and freedoms (ibid, 2020). For Matolino (2020), the second problem is that decoloniality is described as an insurrectionist. He asserts that the implications and meaning of this description suggest that decoloniality only has one interpretation of issues and one method necessary to address the matters (ibid.). However, Eze (2008), take a different route on how to do philosophy in the continent by proposing the exercise of ordinary reason. He contends that for philosophy to be more useful in the continent it is an imperative that there should be distinction between Religion, Art, and politics: splitting the philosophical difference (Eze, 2008: 88). This route appears to possess a capacity to address problems that have confronted decoloniality and decolonization in Africa, specifically in philosophy.

### **3.4 ORDINARY REASON AND SOUTH AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY**

This section seeks, to discuss Eze's ordinary reason, insight and line of thinking invoked by Matolino (2019). But there are few places where Eze has communicated this critique, such as his paper: 'Between, Morality, and Politics in Today's Africa (2008) and his book *On Reason: Rationality in a World of Cultural Conflict and Racism* (2008). However, almost a decade later,

Matolino (2019) offers a revision of Emmanuel Eze in a paper titled: Revisiting Eze on Ubuntu: Interrogating the priority of the Political Over the Philosophical. According to Matolino (2019), Eze's critique seeks to reveal the theoretical limitations of ubuntu as a philosophical tool that intends to inform how philosophy reflects on the political (Matolino, 2019). Eze argues that ubuntu as an extraordinary moral framework may not be suitable to capture ordinary human experiences and subsequently pass an appropriate judgment (2019: 471). According to Eze, to guard philosophy from encroachments that are not philosophical in nature, such as politics, it is necessary to keep and sustain a clear division between politics, moral, and philosophy (2019: 471). He argues that this strict separation would permit philosophy to shift itself and be a philosophy that is without any ideological influences and commitments as this will be qualified to be a good philosophy (ibid: 471). For Eze, philosophy must locate itself and defend a specific kind of reason that he classifies as 'ordinary' reason for good philosophy to properly fulfil its philosophical duties (ibid.). Matolino (2019), reaffirms Eze's critique and line of thinking against ubuntu in threefold. Firstly, he strengthens Eze's critique that ubuntu as an extraordinary moral code is incapable of dealing with ordinary human experience (ibid.). Secondly, he seeks to expand Eze's argument on the aestheticization and ideologizing of ubuntu (ibid.). In this expansion, he attempts to express how such aesthetic and ideological frameworks are designed to destroy or counter the quest of this continent to establish or produce decolonized thought and existence (ibid.). Thirdly, he point out the main goal why ordinary reason by Eze is worth pursuing as a methodologically sustainable path of doing philosophy in Africa (ibid: 147). He asserts that for philosophy to significantly contribute to this continent's population and the generality of philosophy, it should embrace the method proposed by Eze (ibid.). This would influence and shape competence of philosophy in both reason and contextual relevance (ibid.). Finally, Matolino (2019), connects the aims of the second and third section to argue that for African philosophy to be more than mere liberatory and self-affirmative prosaicisms it is imperative for Africa to revitalize itself by adopting a true form of decolonizing.

In this section, Matolino discusses that Eze draws on fictional works of thinkers such as Antjie Krog, J.M Coetzee, and Njabulo Ndebele in his attempt to expose the moral Manichaeism of both the portrayed characters in their works and the space occupied by these characters (South Africa). For Ndebele in his work, he asked: what is responsible for Manichaeism exhibited by South Africans who were once famous for legendary hospitality and wanton murder? And what is

responsible for J.M. Coetzee's characters' moral angst of contradiction and inadequate answers for their moral vacillations? Eze argues that the narrator already possesses an answer to this moral extremism and their claim is that this radicalism is a product of an interrupted African experience (Matolino, 2019: 472). However, for Eze this reply is a reference to moral imagination that fails to reorganize itself and the society in relation to its place or environment; instead, it reflects that environment (2019: 472). For Matolino (2019), Eze asks, if people in this society who vacillate between extremes can be understood in ordinary and political passions. He further highlights that despite passions being the primary stuff of literature, it is also true to claim that passions are primary stuff of human nature as well (ibid.). However, Eze asks further in the case of humans and societies: what does that appeal to nature amount to? According to Matolino (2019), Eze responds to this question by pointing that if we shift from the natural expression of passions in the cited work of fiction to the naturalization of passions in real life of individuals, the question that can be asked is: how do we deal with passions? In this case, Eze holds that if passions are part of nature and also natural to being human, then passions should be historicized in experience (ibid.: 2019). Whatever people pursue about this historicization, it must not end up to the repression of nature but its socialization and its humanization (ibid.). Therefore, for Eze it may be possible for supporters of ubuntu to hope that the process of socializing and humanizing nature will give rise to results which encourage honor, heroism, knowledge, and other associated merits (ibid.). However, this direction of the sympathizers of ubuntu might have hope that can fail to properly deal with the demands of naturalizing passions (ibid.). The questions that could be asked are: how do people humanize and socialize nature? Is it by relying either on the idea of ubuntu or what its supporters hope it to achieve, when properly shown, animated or implemented? Further, it could be asked: is there anything about ubuntu that makes the socialization process to be in favour of honour, heroism, and knowledge? On the latter question, Eze thinks of it in terms of what he dubs as "the extraordinary" – an angle which ubuntu is expected to proceed to deal with in the ordinary realm of passions (2019: 473). He also highlights that it is this extraordinary that will, it is hoped, successfully socialize passions (ibid.). Matolino also discusses that he does think of the same question in terms of any moral code that seeks to socialize what is present in nature (ibid.). He asserts that by its own essence, nature is unchangeable and whatever attempts of socializing it should take into consideration the very mode of its immutability (Matolino, 2019). But, in some instances where nature's experience changes, those changes are not fast and are owed to a

complexity of factors that function at multiple (ibid.). Therefore, Matolino (2019), contends that Ubuntu or any beliefs linked with its potential achievement will fail to meet these complex and multiple levels of demands to shift nature in the direction of honor, heroism, and knowledge. According to Eze the reason that justified this failure to meet these requirements is that this is beyond what ubuntu can handle (ibid.). Matolino (2019), highlights that the question which Eze did not pursue at any length is to know why people are interested in harmonizing and socializing passions. However, Matolino (2019), ask: does the harmonization and socialization of passions ever seeks to serve a specific purpose that we should identify as necessitating the intervention of codes such as ubuntu? He clarifies that the reason of this project is finding modes of existence that emerge in the banal but seek to move beyond that banality (ibid.). The point that is asserted by Eze is that the moral imagination that is supported by ubuntu which is perceived to give socialization of nature favouring honor, heroism, and knowledge is not working (ibid.). Matolino claims that this notion of ubuntu by Eze as being too much and failing to deal with a trap of the dialectic of the experience it seeks to address is worth pursuing (ibid: 474). He further emphasizes that:

If we take the response given as an explanation to the contradictions in this space, the co-existence of the good (hospitality) and the bad (murder)—a response that essentially puts all blame on interrupted experience (brought by a change in social and political order)—together with the perils of ubuntu’s inability to escape the dialectic it seeks to address, we might begin to get a precise picture of how ubuntu fails. Eze condemns the explanation for the contradictions of this place in terms of an interrupted experience as a reference ‘to a moral *imagination*, which, in my translation, seems to abdicate the responsibility to reorder self and society in relation to an environment, and instead merely reflects this environment’ (ibid: 474-475).

The conception that is highlighted by Eze and affirmed by Matolino is that the failure of ubuntu to transform and confront the contradicting human conditions in this place is due to the African constant reference to the colonial past. The African has been pointing the past not with an intent to learn from it and develop. But they have persistently invoked it as a substitute to their responsibility to transform this place. And ubuntu as a moral code which is designed to transform this place is incapable of bringing any significance transformation. Matolino suggests that it is in the elucidation of the contradictions of the self and society in this place on one hand and on the



contrary, it is that the moral imagination at work fails to extract itself from an impoverished outlook (2019: 475). He asserts that the self and the society can be perceived as of having some discomfiting traits of moral ambivalences and this can be in relation to the environment or the environment itself or both (ibid.). There is an attempt to find and understand the reason of the disjuncture existence between the environment, self, and the society (ibid.). However, the response from this emphasizes that the existence of both self and society as results of the interrupted existence is the accountable for this state of affairs (Matolino, 2019). According to Matolino (2019), there is nothing inaccurate about this supposition, but what makes it improper to Eze is that this explanation is more comfortable with the most basic truths. He also envisions that all who possess an interest in the relationship between self and society in one hand and on the other hand their connections with this place or environment of their operation have a common understanding (ibid.). Their understanding and knowledge are that the past disruptions in this place had a devastating effect (ibid.). But the question posed by Matolino seeks to ask: what do we need to do about this truth, beyond the rehash of this well-known effect? The answer to this question for Matolino is that the African should take a different responsibility instead of just reflecting this place or environment (ibid.). This is the same recommendation made by Eze dubbed as ‘the responsibility to re-organize self and the society in relation to an environment’ (ibid: 475). The question that emerges from Matolino (2019), seeks to know why this reordering of self and the society is important and how it can be approached. The reorganization as an idea is perceived to proceed from the recognition that the fundamentals that have been ruined need to be deliberately corrected (ibid.). But the act of deliberately correcting a situation which has been ruined involves at least two levels (ibid.). Firstly, there should be an honest appreciation to set what has been ruined in ways that are progressive and developmental (ibid.). In other words, this means the process of correcting or fixing the wrong is not necessarily compelled to take a retrospective mode of operation (ibid.). Matolino contends that the developmental or forward-looking approach have a potential which can lead to some creative reflections on the identified issues (ibid.). This can be done by developing a conceptual framework that connects all aspects of the relationship between the contradictions expressed at the individual and social level in relation to the environment (ibid, 2019: 476). The emphasis is that attaching these interconnected realities together is a delicate act of conceptual delineation and reconstruction that demands more than a simple revivalist account (ibid.). However, from this delineation, the corrosive and contradictory relations can be

reorganized to give rise into a future that is not trapped in the corrosive and the imprisonment of the past (ibid.). Secondly, Matolino (2019) contends that the practical adoption of steps comes after the freeing and progressive conceptual delineation. He highlights that the steps reorganizing and its interactions with the individuality and community must be necessarily inclined at the level of shaping the reality that is sensitive to almost all the levels of the complexities of existence that characterize the new and opposing reality and its tension (ibid.). His emphasis points that these steps, to maintain connection with the conceptual origin, are steps that are fundamentally different both in their form and intent to the revivalist one (ibid.).

The primary reason Matolino (2019), pursue this approach is due to his belief in two autochthonous factors that are responsible for molding the African thought and reality in the continent. He argues that the number one factor relates to thought in this continent, as thought is sufficiently responsible for adjusting itself in its response or reflection to its environment (ibid.). He further holds that thought can be focused towards moulding that environment so that it changes into a particular form with equally specific outlooks and intentions (ibid.). The second factor is about the African reality “it is again consistent with being African to both imagine and experience, reality as a contour that changes in response to variety of factors that may be imposed on its topography” (2019: 476). He believes that these aspects are both affect to almost all the modes of human existence in the continent, from traditional, to modern and beyond (ibid.). It is from this understanding that Matolino (2019), suggests that ubuntu as amoral code is expected to perform a miracle and perform something beyond its capacity. This heavy expectation from ubuntu emerge due to the disconnection between its basic principle and theorization that is not united with the changed social circumstances (ibid.). This means ubuntu had to be miraculous under these contradicting conditions, by performing an operative effect of giving virtuous qualities where ordinary interpretations and understandings of the demands of justice may just as well serve the necessary purpose (ibid.). This justifies Eze’s assertion that we have put morality to the irregularity of the extraordinary (ibid, 2009: 476). Therefore, for Matolino, it is not useful for anyone to be optimistic and hopeful about ubuntu to free itself and fulfil what is beyond its capacity as the brutality of this irregularity expresses the inadequacy of hope and optimism (ibid.).

He also seeks to investigate Eze’s argument on the aesthetic and ideological posture of ubuntu (ibid.). In this argument, Eze contends that the success of ubuntu is premised in its defense and

outline as an aestheticized quasi-religious and political thought that was founded for a specific place and epoch (ibid.). However, Eze does have some reservations about the epistemic justification of the commitment of ubuntu and its African particularization (Matolino, 2019). The argument channelled by Eze quoted by Matolino seeks first to expose that ubuntu and other like-minded political projects share the same basic interest as an aestheticized, quasi-religious and political thought crafted for a specific place and time (ibid.). But Eze does express some reservations on the epistemic justification of his commitment and its African particularization, which is reflected on the three incisions discussed by Matolino (ibid: 478). He emphasized that according to Eze:

First ubuntu and similar political projects share the same basic appeal to an, quasi-religious political reality (of a specific time) for their justification. Second, it is possible to raise philosophical questions to the epistemic justification of ubuntu and its related political commitments both in its particularized and universalized claims. And third, there is a possibility of finding these thought devices to be inadequate forms of philosophical reason as they essentially are founded on an ideological commitment (Matolino, 2019: 478).

This is assertion by Eze as discussed by Matolino is self-explanatory, there are three points which are worth noting. The first view seeks to expose numerous political projects at parity with ubuntu that share the same fundamental interest. The second view seeks to reveal that there is an existing possibility for thinkers to initiate questions that are philosophical to the epistemic rationalization of ubuntu including its political commitments in its particularized and universalized claim. Lastly, the third point seeks to highlight that it is possible for think-devices such as *ubuntu*, *Negritude*, *authenticite* and ‘One Nigeria’ etc. to be insufficient modes of thinking philosophically, due to the fact that they are based on commitments that are ideological in nature. What is proposed by Eze, that is supposed to bring fulfilment is an ordinary form of reason that is historical in orientation (ibid.). Matolino (2019), tackles the first two incisions and later ends with the final one to offer some profundity. Incision number one seeks to claim that ubuntu is grouped together with political ideals like negritude, authenticite, and versions of ‘One Nation’ etc. However, for Matolino, Eze's admission is that similarities of other political ideals and ubuntu are partial but significant (ibid.). And these similarities that connect ubuntu with other theories also implicate ubuntu to its greater degree in the conceptual errors of the sort applicable to this kind of group (Matolino, 2019). He

reiterates that what connects ubuntu in the same group shared with negritude is based on the second point of incision number one (ibid.). It is basically their collective appeal to an aestheticized and ideologized political arrangement of a specific epoch (ibid.). However, the issue with ubuntu is not due to it being aestheticized or ideologized but it is based on how this moral code is invoked from its specific period of history, a period that has passed and foisted as a laudable way of being African in the here and now (ibid.). He emphasized that this is foisted in a current era that has been openly accepted by all to be disrupted by colonialism from continuity and congruity with the past (ibid.). He also asserts that when one makes an inquiry to find a reason on what justifies the invoking of ubuntu in the present era it is clear that ubuntu is only invoked as an aestheticized and ideologized reference to what it meant in a past era to be an African person in a specific way, place, and epoch (ibid.). The main aim of ubuntu or what it intends to achieve is some appropriate ground that will form an adequately credible moral connection between the aestheticized past and the interrupted presence (ibid.). However, Matolino (2019: 479), discusses in depth the failure of the aesthetic and the ideological, he points out that due to the African encounter with the colonial, there was a direct attempt to revive and reiterate the beauty and conceptual sustainability of indigenous modes of thought. But the African ended up with the aestheticized ideals such as negritude and the ideological modes such as ujamaa (ibid.). He also explains that:

Whilst this approach may be understandable, and could even have been desirable at some stage, we cannot ignore its folklorist and essentialized status, as mode of thought. We cannot cover up, without some considerable damage to our philosophical responsibility, its limitations as a thought system of a particular and contextualized moment of being African (ibid: 479).

The point echoed by this is to clarify that it is not implausible for thinkers to invoke this route, but some factors and consequences could not be denied about this think device. It is impossible to adopt this without destroying the philosophical responsibility and its shortcomings as a system of thought of a previous, specific, and contextualized era of being African. Matolino (2019), sees another possibility, that this might not be a cover up, but a frank recall of the moment that exists within the memory of an African which she identifies with an uninterrupted aesthetic era of her existence. He asks whether this could be the reality that after the aesthetic period the African had no alternative or new framework of reference that provides sense except the aesthetic instance

represented in ubuntu. However, he holds that despite this being a possibility, the existing issue is that the aesthetic moment is far removed from the current combination of experiences (ibid.). And emphasized that since the purpose of the aesthetic is to express value that captures what is sublime and worth keeping, it is important to pose a question whether this beauty accurately reflects the current state of human affairs in the continent? What provides more sophistication on this matter is the African presentation of the aestheticized appearance, it is in part a reflection of what the African intend to be seen as and simultaneously what she wants the former oppressor to perceive her as (2019: 479). But this desired appearance in both parts is a reconstruction of irreconcilable, disfigured and destructed appearance (ibid.). According to Matolino “it is a refashioning of a burdened and abused imaginary into acceptable appearance of beauty to the African and those to blame for our deformity” (ibid: 479). Further, the African may perhaps think about this reconstructive exercise as a postcolonial affirmation of the African beauty and being, this might be understood as the transcendence beyond our interrupted experience (ibid.). Matolino makes an inquiry by asking that, even though this project might have some sincerity, does this sincere attempt and resuscitation of the aesthetic succeed in capturing anything that is connected to the true image of the current distortion of African reality? This distortion is a product that is partially due to our own doing and the act of our former colonial oppressors (ibid.). There are no dispute that the African experience has been wrecked by the violence of the past colonial project, but the African has also contributed to their destruction (ibid.). Their propaganda against themselves of constantly putting blame to the West for all failures that has confronted the African (ibid.). This seek not to claim that West is blameless, this point seeks to emphasize that when the African put blame and resurrect our disrupted experience, we either create a narrative that can carry some truth and usefulness or the opposite of truth and usefulness (ibid: 480). Matolino (2019), underline that the issue with the aesthetic appeal of ubuntu is without an accompanying disclaimer of the context of the high moments of its sublime manifestation, one cannot know how to relate to that beauty properly. Therefore, the specification of the beauty in its period and place is crucial since the present time and space does not permit this type of beauty to materialize itself as it did in the previous epoch and place (ibid.). He argues that the issue with this kind of aestheticization is due to its failure to represent and present the current African appearance in aesthetic detail. This problem causes ubuntu as a think-device, as qualified by Eze, to be an incapable mode of thought to rely on in confronting the current state affairs in the continent (ibid.).

The second point, for Matolino (2019), on the ideology seek to propose that ubuntu as a mode of thought is heavily shifted towards the protection of a distinct ideological view (ibid.). A view of what it is to be African and what mode of social arrangement the African should promote or support (ibid.). Matolino (2019: 480) quotes Ramose when he articulates African personhood in traditional thought by attributing ontological superiority to the community. In this conception an individual is persistently seen as part of the community, not as a self-sufficient entity (ibid.). The individual is qualified to be a person in direct proportion to the successful relation she reaches within her social arrangement (ibid.). Ramose argues that holism is the genesis of the conceptualization of a person and this person is seen in holistic term in relation to her community (ibid: 481). Earlier in the same text by Ramose it carries a view that the logic of *ubu-ntu* is distinctly rheomodic in character, as this logic is of and for the protection of being as a wholeness (ibid.). This logic is against the breakdown of being through language. However, Matolino (2019), holds that this is the problem for ubuntu, its holism in its rheomodic persona appears not to accord all facets encompassed in that holistic image, an equal standing or rational capacity. The ontological fact of the individual's distinctiveness is restrained by the ontological primacy of the community which is a supreme determinant of the holism of which every person is expected to be part of (ibid.). He contends that the rheomodic character of ubuntu is difficult to perceive since the freedom of the ability to impact the respective components is not completely free, but heavily inclined in favor of the community. He reiterate that Ramose's ascribing of the community's ontological supremacy in the holism expose the foundation of the epistemic justification that ubuntu relies on as a mode of thought (ibid.). This also suggest that it is a communally founded justification that reifies ties of association among individuals that have to contribute to well-being of the community (ibid.). However, for Matolino (2019: 481), point out that this kind of justification have a dependency on another layer of justification, and this is perceived to be the natural order of being in traditional African thought implying that the individual derivations are not perceived as deserving any ontological primacy. Therefore, the reasoning of ubuntu is centred in the specificities of traditional African logic (ibid.). This kind of logic is what Eze find less or not appealing, the issue with this mode of thought is due it inadequacy to cover both African present experience and also frame the best way of fashioning a way out of the shortcomings of the specificities of our past (ibid.). The African has been captured at the ontological primacy of the community and this primacy crush all other possible realities as it is the only mediator between

the orderly and real (ibid.). Matolino (2019: 482), quotes Augustine Shutte, pointing that when one takes a close look at our communities and the social arrangement there is no harmonious existence of the old, there is no clear distinction between the self and the community, what prevails is disjointed communities (ibid.). He points that, these communities have lost the sense of community, and this is not only due to the previous interrupted experiences, but it is also due to self-inflicted harm by various issues such as rape, ethnic wars, murder of children and political violence etc. in this era of post-colonialism. In this period there are even communities who have become a source of pain, dismembering their own members who are expected to perceive themselves as an expansion of another self (ibid.). Despite both Shutte and Ramose, quickly pointing that their main focus is describing the traditional African society, instead of the modern one (ibid.). These thinkers hold that ubuntu as a think-device is worth reflecting about because it can be a useful informant of the current and the future (ibid.). However, Matolino (2019), is of a view that the success or failure of Shutte and Ramose's suggestions is based on the viability of the community's ontological primacy. He reiterates this by asserting that:

This ontological primacy will be successfully shown in the relations that people have with each other that seek to prioritize the stability and continuity of the community. How this will pan out has to go beyond the theoretical advocacy of a past that once was but has to find a way of appealing to the conditions that real people live under (ibid: 482).

This also points out that if ubuntu fails to appeal to human conditions in the here and now, failing to transform the lives of the people in various ways, it becomes relevant only as an aestheticized text (ibid.). A text that believers invoke when they are their most comfortable and well-behaved or when they are confronted by overwhelming demands of this world, solely left with hopes of the efficacy of community (ibid.). The prioritization of the ontological primacy of the community is an idea that has its own consequences. One of the major consequences of a communitarian societal arrangement is the way the lives of individuals are to be organized socially and politically (ibid.). On the other hand, thinkers such as Thaddeus Metz, suggests a village model that connects all its adults to co-operate in raising children in a particular way (ibid: 482-483). For Metz this includes their collectively regulated way of doing their homework and the specific time when television is not supposed to be watched (ibid.). Metz further states that in this model parents will be expected to be available to be informed on how to raise their children by professionals such as social workers

and psychologists (ibid.). However, on the political front, Metz believes that different sub-Saharan contemporary political philosophers are commonly known to invoke consensus-based models of democracy for large-scale, modern societies (ibid.). Metz does not think to be important to consider is questions around the efficacy of consensus in modern society that has been previously invoked by Eze (ibid: 483). Matolino (2019), claims that this kind of omission by Metz cannot be neglected, but it can be understood as an absolute advocacy of the natural consequent of communitarianism's political arrangement. Matolino (2019), emphasizes that the work of Kwasi Wiredu on communitarianism and consensus, cited by Metz, reveal that both concepts are naturally obtained with comfort in societies that are more inclined or share the same kind of value systems and especially, religious systems. According to Matolino (2019), there is sense of carelessness and insincerity by Metz on both the debates and details on consensus, he is only interested on revealing his commitment to the possibility he thinks ubuntu holds. In the case of South Africa prospect of consensus Metz bring together a promising realization and propagandist hope <sup>5</sup>(ibid: 483). However, for Matolino (2019), there is still an expectation to encounter the value and significance of talking about consensus, if it is quite explicit that consensus is not possible to influence the political trajectory. He clarifies that there could be some meaningful or valuable talk about consensus, but the position that Metz advocates on the *de jure* call for a national unity government is troubling (ibid.). What is troubling is the that in the non-appearance of details and the nature of this form of government the people are only left with speculation (ibid.). Therefore, Matolino (2019), claims that it will be without exaggeration to suggest that the idea of national unity is a creation of the aesthetic and ideological appeal of ubuntu as oneness and whatever imagined character that oneness holds.

This lands Matolino to the final incision, Eze's ordinary reason a method that is philosophic by virtue of rejecting all the unphilosophical encroachments or tendencies by cultural contextualist social morality and politics <sup>6</sup>(2019: 484). However, Eze do consider that there is a confusing or difficult problem or question that can be implied by his position (ibid.). He clarifies that this approach could be surprising, if not outright unsettling for some. He surmise that the discomfort will arise because, according to the stereotype, few expect African philosophers to speak of

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<sup>5</sup> Metz is interpreted by Matolino on this point, his claim on consensus and the *de facto* or *de jure* call for government of national unity.

<sup>6</sup> See (Eze 2008a: 76).



philosophy, morality, or politics in noncontextualist fashion (Matolino, 2019: 484). He also emphasizes that numerous philosophers believe in a necessity to pursue philosophy distinct from both morality and politics properly, while the latter are pursued together (ibid.). Matolino (2019), discusses that the work and life of Eze, testifies for itself the significance of understanding the origin of African philosophy vis-à-vis Western paradigms of racism that prompted global conflict. He characterizes Eze as a philosopher that is solely too cognizant of the conflicts emerging from a racialized philosophy and the prevailing relations between the African and her former oppressors (ibid.). What is fascinating and appealing about this awareness is that it does not lead Eze to parochial commitments to any traditionalistic mode of reason or any affirmative exercise in the aesthetic aspects of traditional thought (ibid: 484). He also asserts that what is noteworthy about Eze, is that he gives priority to the idea of reason as a primary determinant of how one should philosophize in the continent in matters that affect the public spheres or human affairs (ibid.). And him prioritizing a certain idea of reason seek not to suggest that philosophy must forsake sociality or politics, but he proposes that when philosophy operates in areas like moral and political in all cases it must maintain ordinary reason (ibid.).<sup>7</sup> This philosophic reason for Eze is capable of dealing with issues and challenges currently confronting the continent and can reflect on matters or limitations of this place, with the present demands of the people contextualized in Africa. By thinking through ordinary reason, the African is able to see how the immediate milieu can be conceived or apprehended in a way that is not so aestheticized or ideologized (ibid.). According to Matolino (2019), Eze precisely sees the manoeuvre of reason and the work of ordinary reason as processes that involve reflecting profoundly and making up one's mind. He clarifies that making up one's mind means the individual and society shape any kind of reality that appears appropriate from their mental autonomy (ibid: 485).<sup>8</sup> For Matolino (2019), the aspect which carries significance in this case is that there is a need to craft reality as objective from a subjective perspective. But, to fulfil this duty, the mental autonomy must be guaranteed, and this can only materialize through securing its own freedom to engage in processes it deems fit (ibid.). Once this reality has materialised, then either the individual or society will be qualified and classified to have engaged in the business of, making up one's mind (ibid.). He emphasizes that making up one's mind is a procedure that people pursue when they are creatively and actively making or remaking

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<sup>7</sup> See (Eze 2008a: 89) and (Matolino, 2019: 484-485).

<sup>8</sup> See (Eze 2008a: 84) and (Matolino, 2019:485).

their own existence (ibid.). The idea of nature that Eze makes a reference to, is understood by Matolino (2019), to point to the inseparability of the African ability to fashion reality and the inescapability of that act of fashioning that reality. He thinks this kind of reason is the one that is accountable to itself and for its own invention and it is only informed by its own light, including how its seek out to read and gain understanding of its place (ibid.). The quest to fashion the reality, as an inevitable feature of individual or human agency, suggest that there should be a supreme level of independent thinking (ibid.). Suppose by any possibility, independent thinking is absent. In that case, there is no assurance that the individual and the community will engage in acts that attempt to make objective sense of their surroundings or place (ibid.). Therefore, Matolino (2019), is of a view that this kind of free thinking, which carries it a duty to inquire to one's finest ability, is what philosophical thought ought to be construed as. He stresses that if the African think of philosophy as a journey of wondering about reality, including the reality of the citizens of the rudiments of our societies and the relation continuing from them there is a kind of realization that an African must have (ibid.). The African will realize that while there is significance in having a historical sense of the numerous factors that have been persistently compressed into that reality, there is a need not necessarily be captive of history (ibid.). Moreover, Matolino (2019), holds that this should not be grasped as a rebuttal of the importance of our past reality's ability to immerse itself into the present, but it is advocacy of how one approaches in thinking of the present as an outcome of interrupted experience or past (ibid.). Hence, he thinks of Eze's vital contribution to the discourse on ubuntu as an attempt to implore philosophers to rethink the use of ubuntu as a thought device (ibid.). He reiterate that Eze's argument suggests that when one invokes ubuntu as a frame of conceptual analysis, she should be cognizant of, and think seriously about the lines differentiating the aesthetical and political on one instance and the philosophical on the other (ibid.). In conclusion, according to Matolino (2019), there are three reasons why this distinction is worthy of serious consideration. Firstly, it exposes the philosopher's duty in an environment such as where ubuntu emanates. Secondly, it protects philosophy from conceptual and experiential mix-up, a mixture that may impede philosophical endeavors. Thirdly, it permits philosophy to pursue what it should do, which will make a philosophical contribution to the current state (ibid.).

### **3.5 Conclusion**

The chapter began by examining the nature and the pursuit of philosophy in South Africa in a pre-democratic era, a characterization by Wolff (1986). Further, it has reflected on the content, nature, and practice of this place's philosophy an age of democracy. Thirdly, it has discussed some of the matters that have emerged due to how philosophy has been conducted and prioritized by its practitioners in South Africa. Lastly, it has elucidated on Eze ordinary reason, a conception on how philosophy should navigate or operate in Africa in relations to politics and morality to reflect on philosophical issues fruitfully.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: THE PHILOSOPHY ESTABLISHMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA**

### **4. Introduction**

In this chapter, I seek to pursue two arguments to justify or cement my purpose in undertaking this project. Firstly, I intend to argue how South African philosophers have undermined themselves as a people by abandoning and practicing philosophy in a way that is unoriginal and irrelevant to this place. And how the imitation of foreign philosophy has challenged their dignity, hindering them from reaching their full potential. Secondly, I provide a supporting argument on why Eze's approach is convincing and worthy to be embraced by South African intellectuals to transform their philosophy.

#### **4.1 The Failure of South African thinkers to Prioritize their humanness**

In this section, I seek to argue and show how South African professional philosophers have failed to prioritize themselves as human beings in a place that influences their lives by imitating Western philosophy. These thinkers have failed to treat themselves significantly in a place where they are expected to influence their practice of philosophy. However, it is necessary to point that my argument emanates from an understanding that has been offered by thinkers such as Ramose (2002), Jones (2006), Malpas (2007), Janz (2009), Matolino (2015), Olivier (2016), and Tabensky (2017) etc. These philosophers have established, affirmed, and reiterated a position that philosophy emerges from a thinker's lifeworld, and philosophy must reflect that lifeworld. They have emphasized that due to an inseparable connection between philosophy and its context, philosophers have a moral obligation to reflect a philosophy that is sensitive to its context or milieu. South Africa as a place of philosophy has confronted an issue of an absence of a philosophy that seek not to prioritize the South African citizens and their problems. Contemporary thinkers of this place such as Ramose, Matolino, Tabensky and Olivier argued that the practice of South African philosophy has consistently failed to reflect the context of this place where philosophy is practiced. According to these thinkers, the philosophy pursued by the majority of thinkers in this place reflects a decontextualized Western philosophy. My argument seeks to expand from this claim. The argument is divided into two sections. Firstly, it seeks to explain the meaning of humanness for a philosopher who is stationed in this place. Secondly, it seeks to elucidate on how the imitation of Western philosophy by South African philosophers is connected to the failure of these philosophers to prioritize their quality of being human (humanness).

It is necessary to understand the function of philosophy in connection with humans in order to give a coherent meaning of humanness. Matolino (2015), asserts that there are two ways one can understand the use of philosophy to humans. The first approach is that philosophy can be understood as something that thinkers can merely use to benefit something from it or use to achieve specific desired result (ibid.). This approach also suggests that any philosophy can be of service to a thinker as much as it can produce the desired outcome. On the contrary, the second approach holds that philosophy can be understood and be based on how it influences humans in a certain way (ibid.). This implies that philosophy can be used to transform people into better moral agents (ibid.). These two approaches have been part of the discipline time immemorial, and philosophers have consistently employed them (ibid.). However, Matolino (2015), attempts to comprehend whether these two ways of the purpose of philosophy are at parity with each other in terms of the results they produce for all human beings. Two opposing responses seek to confront this question. The first one possesses no intentions to give priority and significance on the local human condition where the person operates (ibid.). But the second response emphasizes on the specificity of the local human conditions (ibid: 406). The reason for the former to not prioritize the local conditions is due to a general conception that universally, human beings have key features they share that make them human (ibid.). These shared features potentially have identical metaphysics, leading humans to probably be governed or regulated by the impulses that respond to similar principles (ibid.). Therefore, the contextualized experience has to be tweaked in accordance with the core idea of what a human is in a general sense (ibid.). However, the latter view has a different orientation, the prevailing human condition exist to have an effect on human experience. This experience is understood to be significant in regulating what humans aspire to attain or what they give value as a people (ibid.). Matolino (2015), highlights that good arguments can be crafted to support both positions, however, in this paper he does not pursue this any further. He seeks to evaluate how philosophy can be useful for both situations and to attain clarity on what situation is probable in reaping more benefits from philosophical reflection (ibid: 476). He responds to this question by first attempting to understand the basic purpose of philosophy, what is it really about. He points out that it is indisputable that people generally understand philosophy as something abstract and far removed from the day-to-day matters and concerns affecting almost all society members (ibid.). But the question concerning Matolino is whether this conception of philosophy carries any truth. He claims that the truth which can be confirmed from this is that various branches

of philosophy including the topics that are tackled in this discipline are distant from human conditions and their everyday concerns (ibid.). Philosophy is conceived as an abstract activity; therefore, there are possibilities for people to understand philosophy as not being concerned with immediate human matters in their local context (ibid.). Hence, this conception of philosophy opens a room for philosophy to deal with human concerns, which are abstract in nature, universal concerns while simultaneously not really speaking to anyone specific (ibid.). According to Matolino (2015), this conception of philosophy fail to paint a whole picture about philosophy.

But despite this failure there are prevailing pertinent truths about the interest of philosophy in pursuing abstract things, a philosophy that seeks to speak of the general and distinguishing human condition (ibid.). He argues that this is not all of philosophy, but a particular kind of philosophy (ibid: 476). For Matolino (2015), it is noteworthy to point out that the basic duty of philosophy is not to deal with abstract for the sake of abstraction, where abstract are perceived to be served by philosophy, the contrary stands as truth, abstraction is always in service of philosophy, a philosophy that is obliged to serve humanity (ibid.). He emphasize that philosophy should serve all human race, but since the basic human conditions are different, philosophy should prioritize localized people, where thinkers are stationed at any given moment (ibid.). This claim also emanates from an understanding that philosophy is inseparable from its place or the context of its practitioners, which is the real nature of philosophy (ibid.). My understanding of this nature of philosophy connects with my conception of the nature of a human being who happen to be a philosopher. To classify someone as a human being in general and a philosopher in particular, one must satisfy or meet certain requirements. Firstly, a person in the context of living a normal human life must first be aware of her situatedness in a place, how that place shapes and influences her present and future life, including other people as well as children. This kind of understanding and awareness allows this person to know what things should be modified, developed, and influenced by her as a responsible human being and a thinker. To put this differently, a human being is expected to fulfil certain responsibilities and make certain choices as a response to her context or milieu not only for the interest of others but most importantly for herself. What justifies this requirement is due to her intrinsic possession of agency the capacity of a human to make choices and execute or impose those choices in her lifeworld. Therefore, if a thinker can meet these basic requirements which express the type of awareness to her context, it is plausible to claim that she

prioritize herself and her humanness. This humanness qualifies someone including this thinker to be classified as a normal human being.

The question that emerges from this understanding seeks to inquire on: How is it possible for a person who meet the basic requirements of a normal being, a philosopher in South Africa, can be accused of not having a philosophy that is sensitive to his place? This question also seeks to ask: How can a thinker stationed in South Africa fail to prioritize her geography of reason that shapes her present and future life? What makes this question interesting is that a thinker accused of neglect did not just reflect a decontextualized philosophy from nowhere, but she reflected a decontextualized Western philosophy. There can be some possible reasons and arguments that thinkers can make to justify this kind of reflection. However, I believe that none of this can be convincing. Though, some thinkers can intractably attempt to justify this act, by claiming that if a thinker decides to practice a philosophy that reflect the context and the place of their forefathers, a place she has a historical connection with as a human being. By classifying this kind of a thinker as someone who have violated the basic principles of philosophy is incoherent. However, this kind of reasoning fail to do harm against my claim, due its inability to recognize that the only usage and the plausibility of invoking any past context like the one of our forefathers, whether there is a direct link or not is to understand the present-day reality that has a direct impact in human life. The importance of the past context is to conceive how the past influences or shapes the current state of affairs and what lessons can be learned from that past. This also implies that there is no value in reflecting a context that is far-removed from a thinker at the expense of her own context despite any historical connection with it. This can be stated as follows: if a white philosopher, in South Africa claims that by pursuing or reflecting a decontextualized Western philosophy, is justified by her ancestral connection with the it (West). This line of reasoning should not be worth entertaining. What also justifies lack of interest in tackling this claim is that since philosophy cannot be divorced from its milieu or place of practice, and a human person can be characterized as normal by consistently possessing awareness on how her immediate or current existence and her future influence each other. Therefore, this reiterates the claim that no argument can justify the pursuit of a decontextualized western philosophy or the violation of fundamental principles of philosophizing. Based on this understanding of philosophy, South African thinkers' pursuit of an insensitive western philosophy can be classified as mimesis. An imitation that produce a philosophy that violates the fundamental principles of philosophizing which are in conflict with

the nature of philosophy to reflect the lifeworld of a thinker before anything else. Mimicry, in general, and particularly in philosophy where independent thinking is offered a great esteem, is a trait that have a negative, undermining, and belittling connotation. There are various conceptions which can emerge if one is found mimicking or imitating the other, especially in philosophy but I am interest in two of them for the purpose of my argument.<sup>9</sup> A thinker can be perceived as lazy or incapable of thinking independently or can be understood as confirming that philosophy (Western) is more<sup>10</sup> valuable than her contextual philosophy that shapes her existence. Both these conceptions question the humanness in a thinker that imitates and the way she prioritize herself as a being.

According to Wiredu (1980: 54) ‘one way in which a man can lose his soul is by being prevented from trying to think for herself or, even more terribly, by being rendered unable to think for herself’. It is necessary to clarify this text and the way one should understand how the concept of the soul is employed in this case. The soul, especially from a religious or Christian point of view is one of the properties that qualifies an individual to be seen as a complete human being. And Wiredu likens any individual prohibited from thinking for herself or classified as incapable of engaging in thought processes as being at risk of losing this significant property of being a whole human. However, this argument focuses on the latter view of being classified as incapable of thinking. On the other hand, it is important to emphasize that if someone is accused of mimicry or imitation, it is an accusation that undermines, demeans and at worst, dehumanizes. It suggests that an individual is either lazy to have original independent thoughts about something or she is basically incapable of thinking, including failing to think for herself. Therefore, the failure of South African philosophers to prioritise their original contextual thought in their place of philosophy and opt to reflect a philosophy that is foreign. A philosophy irrelevant to transforming or influencing their immediate existence can be understood as their failure to prioritize their humanness. However, it is possible for an objection to emerge against my argument claiming that mimicry, mimesis or aping only carry relevance when one tackles colonial matters of race, identity and culture between blacks and whites. The work of post-colonial thinkers such as Homi Bhabha: of *Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse* (1984) can be invoked to justify this

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<sup>9</sup> See Eze (1999) and Biakolo (1998).

<sup>10</sup> See Matolino (2015: 434) and Eze (2008) the universalist conception of philosophy.



objection. Some can even go as far as invoking Hume's footnote,<sup>11</sup> claiming that only black or other races were arbitrarily accused of imitation by racist thinkers like Hume, and to charge white or others of aping can be perceived as reverse racism or revenge.<sup>12</sup> Another objection can state that thinkers of this continent should not stop engaging western thinkers or philosophy, a philosophy that has more literature as compared to African philosophy, but if South African thinkers are accused of mimicry, this can be impossible. These two objections appear to carry some weight at first glance, however, when one offers a closer look, they are misguided. The first objection is condescending as it suggests that the only merits in speaking of mimesis is only if one talks of colonial matters between races, cultures, or identities. This portrays whites as a people incapable of imitating and violating basic principles of philosophizing or incapable of prioritizing themselves by failing to pursue a contextual philosophy that is more relevant to them. And it represents the other as the only subject associated with aping or inconsiderate self. But the correct view is that any human, regardless of race, class, and gender, can be accused of and is capable of mimicry; therefore, this claim is misdirected. The second objection that African philosophers should never cease to be in conversation with other philosophies, including Western philosophy, is the same point that was stressed by Wiredu (1996). However, engaging with other philosophies does not imply that African philosophers should mimic a decontextualized philosophy. But it means philosophers should engage on matters common in all philosophies since humans share certain metaphysical features, while maintaining some fundamental differences due to contextual veracities. Therefore, to accuse philosophers of aping does not impede African philosophy from having a conversation with other philosophies.

#### **4.2 How an appropriate 'contextual' philosophy should operate.**

For the philosophy of this place to be authentic, pertinent, and valuable, I believe it should prioritize the conception or idea proposed by Eze and affirmed by Matolino (2019). Eze holds that it is worthy for philosophy to order itself in a manner that rejects all the philosophical encroachments of the political, cultural, and social. Matolino affirms that the purpose of this uncommon proposition or separation of morality and politics is significant for philosophy. He points out that Eze's life is a testimony of this proposition, as it reflects the vitality of

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<sup>11</sup> See Eze (1999: 54). Part of this footnote, Hume is witnessed with a racist remark on the intellect of a black person likening it to a parrot, that is celebrated for mimicking few words plainly.

<sup>12</sup> See Wiredu (1996:137).

comprehending the genesis of African philosophy vis-à-vis Western patterns of racism that encouraged global conflict (ibid.). He describes Eze as a thinker that only had great awareness of the conflicts that emanates from racialized philosophy including the existing relationship between the African and their past colonizers (ibid.). Yet, this kind of awareness is pleasing, since it does not direct Eze to narrow or limited commitments to any traditionalistic form of reason or affirmative pursuit in traditional thought's aesthetic aspects. He further argues that Eze can prioritize the idea of reason as a primary determining factor in how philosophy should be conducted in this continent to deal with human affairs. And he supports that the ordinary reason by Eze can confront and address contemporary and 'contextual' issues in this place of philosophy (ibid.). For Matolino (2019), the significance of this is how Eze sees the maneuver of reason and the function of the ordinary reason as procedures that involves reflecting deeply and making up one's mind (ibid.). He illuminates that making up one's mind suggests that both the individual and the society are responsible for shaping any kind of reality that seems appropriate from their mental autonomy (ibid.). The truth is that there is a demand to establish an objective reality from a subjective perspective (ibid.). However, for the fulfilment of this task, it is compulsory to guarantee the mental autonomy of the African; this can only prevail through securing its own freedom to engage in processes its regards as suitable (2019).

I also find this philosophical approach appealing and worth pursuing in a diverse and changing South African society. This is due to a few important events, such as the Fees Must Fall, also understood as an instance where students demanded the university curriculum to be decolonized or reflect this continent (Matolino, 2020). This event revealed various exclusions in South Africa (ibid.). Firstly, most underprovided black students felt deprived of an opportunity to be part of tertiary institutions in their place due to an unbearable increment of school fees (ibid.). Secondly, they felt excluded by the Eurocentric content taught in these institutions (ibid.). And <sup>13</sup>Rhodes must fall is another encounter where students demonstrated against colonial statue symbols like the one of Cecil John Rhodes. This event is also synonymous with the latter claim of Fees Must Fall (decolonization). Further, issues such as gender-based violence and homosexuality (LGBTQ) have persisted in this environment. Therefore, I am convinced that in addressing problems like this in a diverse society governed by a constitution that promotes individual rights and freedoms, one

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<sup>13</sup> See Rhodes Must Fall: Struggle to Decolonize Racist Heart of Empire (2018).

needs to reflect and make up her mind profoundly. The individual and the South African society are responsible for redesigning their society or communities on their own terms. This country is full of citizens who come from different origins of life and ‘context’; there is a combination of different tribes, ethnic groups, and races who carry various norms, cultures, and traditions. However, forging a society that permits the individual and community-based life to flourish simultaneously demands a system that is less influenced but not ignorant of these values and norms to make sense of that reality. I believe it is only through the consistent use of sober rationality and philosophizing that can make that reality tangible. And disconnecting philosophy from other encroachments can allow this field to produce results that could make citizens feel accountable, respected, and trusted as human beings that are naturally gifted with reason. I also hold that Eze’s approach is appealing due to its connection with the South African constitution, which responsibly permits individuals and society to be authors of their reality. However, one can object to this claim by suggesting that separating philosophy from cultural, political, and moral while employing ordinary reason as determining factor implies that it is only philosophers who can entertain human affairs profoundly. It undermines the contribution of other perspectives for a thinker to have a broad and well-informed appreciation of matters and to see their influence as encroachment is not acceptable. But this line of reasoning is flawed. It carries a parochial understanding of philosophy and other perspectives. Eze’s rationality and the disentanglement of philosophy do not symbolize any hierarchy of power, and it has no interest in denying the meaningful influence of other disciplines on its practice. Simultaneously, philosophy is also mindful of some stuffing influences that can limit its potential to productive and influential. Therefore, Eze’s approach appears to be convincing.

## **Conclusion**

The chapter has advanced two arguments. It have demonstrated the dehumanizing nature of the pursuit of philosophy practitioners within South African borders. Then, it affirmed Eze’s argument on why his approach is convincing and pertinent to embraced in this state for intellectuals to transform their philosophy.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: GENERAL CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this research project characterizes how it has achieved its objectives and provides possible further research that can be investigated for future purposes and benefit African and South African thought systems. In the preceding chapters, the study had to meet the following three goals; to critically examine the lack of a well-founded, contextualized, and transformative South African philosophy. Identify the problems caused by the lack of a sensitive philosophy in this milieu. And finally, emphasize the aim, significance, and pertinence of authentic South African philosophy. Understanding the nature of a relationship between ‘context,’ experience, and philosophical reflection is foundational in this project since it is interested in ‘contextual’ philosophy. Nkrumah (1970) offered a clear insight on this relationship and its significance in philosophizing. He highlighted how the content of and what is prioritized by philosophy in different epochs has varied based on human experience and social environment—further explained by Janz (2009) on how philosophy is connected to or relates to its place. He established that no place is excluded from pursuing philosophy, making two expositions. Firstly, the historical exclusion of Africans as subjects that are incognizant of themselves, and their place is premised on an unfounded justification. Secondly, the classification of this place as incapable of philosophy is based on racism against an African.

The original contribution of this research is to advocate for theorization and philosophy that take the African and the South African experience, way of life, and agency, including the exercise of reason. Thinkers such as Eze (1999) and Ramose (2002) have discussed how this living being has been disregarded in philosophy and subjected to harsh conditions based on the prejudice of colonizers. The intention was for an African to be able to counter the certain false narratives crafted about her by thinkers like Kant, Hume, and Aristotle and redefine herself as a person. Ramose (2002) interprets this exercise as an independent assessment and construction of knowledge in the light of the unfolding African experience as a vital aim and an act of emancipation. Chapter One, my discussion intended to give a direction and assert that context, experience, and people are always at the centre of philosophy. My concern was explicitly about African and South African philosophy on how it should understand this nature of philosophy, which is impossible to denounce. I wanted to show that any progressive ambitions that thinkers of this country can propose cannot be achieved without this understanding. I have attempted to explain this phenomenologically, explaining the nature of experience, reason, and philosophy by invoking

Olivier (2016). Chapter Two revealed my appreciation and knowledge of how the enlightenment or modern era has racially handled the other in philosophical matters. The understanding of enlightenment permits my discussion on comprehending universalism and African philosophy by Matolino (2015). I intend to expose how the universalist conception of philosophy, its history, and its relationship with other philosophies are misguided as they can be traced from modern philosophy. I also invoked Wiredu (1980) to demonstrate two points; firstly, African philosophy immediately after colonial independence was conducted by two groups, the non-professional, and professional philosophers. However, the philosophy that influenced the daily experience in the continent was the one pursued by non-professional thinkers who were also political rulers that fought for independence. Secondly, my point was to reveal that the influence of the former through philosophy was not legitimate since it was authoritarian. Therefore, it highlighted the need for professional philosophy. Chapter Three, I demonstrated how South Africa's apartheid experience or encounter made it different from other African states. I also illustrated how this country's professional philosophy has been practiced and how insensitive or unsympathetic it was during the oppressive regime of apartheid. I further demonstrate how philosophy has been in the current period of democracy, individual freedom, and human right. Jones (2016), Matolino (2015), Olivier (2016), and Tabensky (2017) confirm that there have been slight changes in the nature and the content of this place's philosophy; it still reflects a foreign western philosophy. And it is still decontextualized the same way philosophy was conducted in apartheid. Matolino (2020) takes a step further by claiming that the failure of South African professional philosophers to produce a philosophy reflects the experiences or traits of this place contributed to the students' protests demanding a decolonized university curriculum. I intended to point out some of the issues that have materialized as a result of the lack of 'contextual' philosophy while thinkers in place were preoccupied with Western philosophy. Due to this urgent need for a well-founded, authentic, and valuable philosophy, there is also a need for a practical approach to achieving this task, and Matolino (2019) proposed Eze's reason as a convincing approach. In this case, I aspired to demonstrate that, despite the urgent demand for this place's relevant philosophy, thinkers must adopt or craft an appealing approach for this to be a success. Chapter Four; I made two arguments to demonstrate that the pursuit of western philosophy by intellectuals stationed in this place has dehumanized and undermined their humanness. It has raised questions about their urgency as not

only thinkers but as normal humans. I have also argued why we should follow Eze's approach presented by Matolino (2019) to produce a valuable philosophy.

## **5.1 Further Research**

In this research I have demonstrated, the issues with the absence of a proper philosophy, it has further pointed on how and why there is lack of sensitive philosophy in this place. I has highlighted, why there is an urgent need of a relevant South African philosophy and clarified the purpose of this demand concerning the African and South African experiences. Lastly, I argued why, Eze's way of pursuing philosophy is appealing. But there are various areas that I have not given attention because of their scope and their contribution was going to alter the aim of this project. However, I believe they are worthy of pursuing as stand-alone projects to advance South African philosophy in the future. Jonathan O. Chimakonam (2017) has been a significant proponent of conversationalism, as a mode of reflecting in and beyond the philosophy of the continent. Conversationalism, is a method that is not old it is interested in possibly grounding discourses in African and intercultural philosophies. And its attempt to properly explore the notion of relationship in the southern part of the continent to formulate the method above.

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